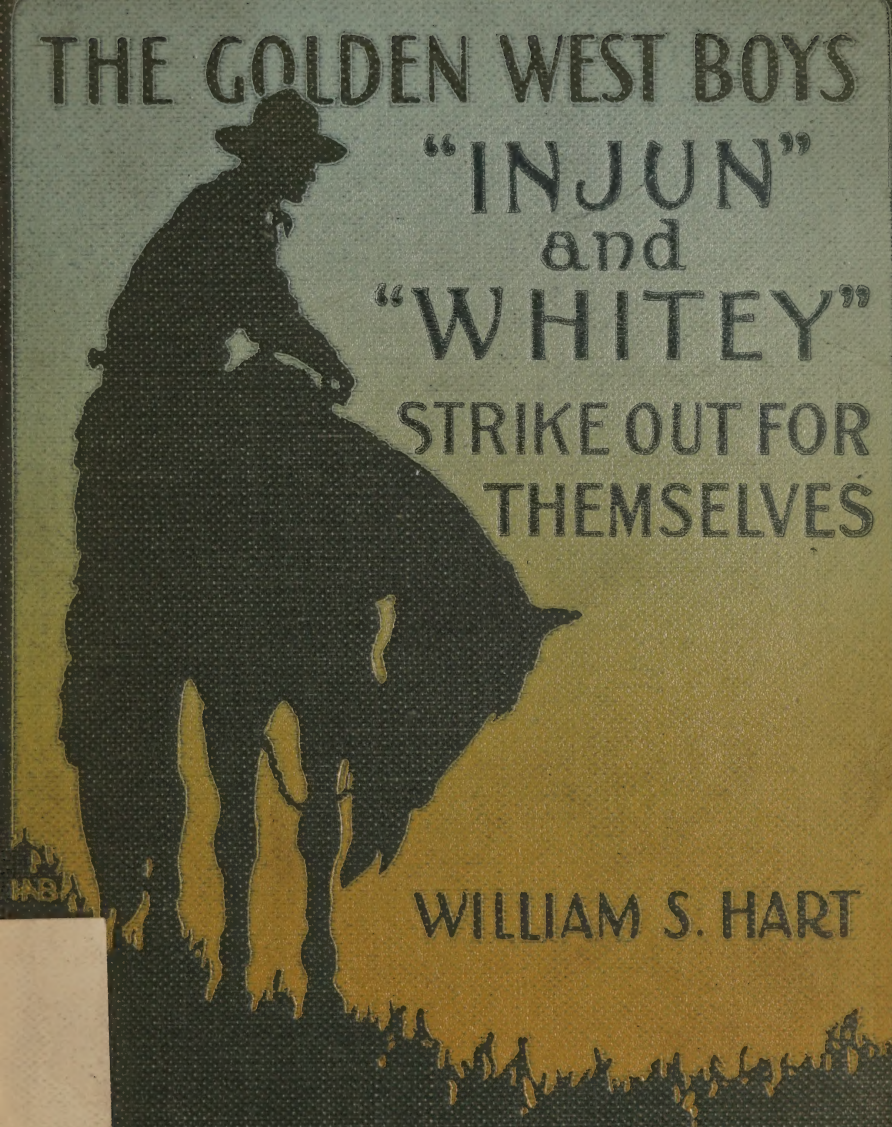
THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

"INJUN" and "WHITEY" STRIKE OUT FOR THEMSELVES



WILLIAM S. HART

BOYS' GOLDEN WEST SERIES

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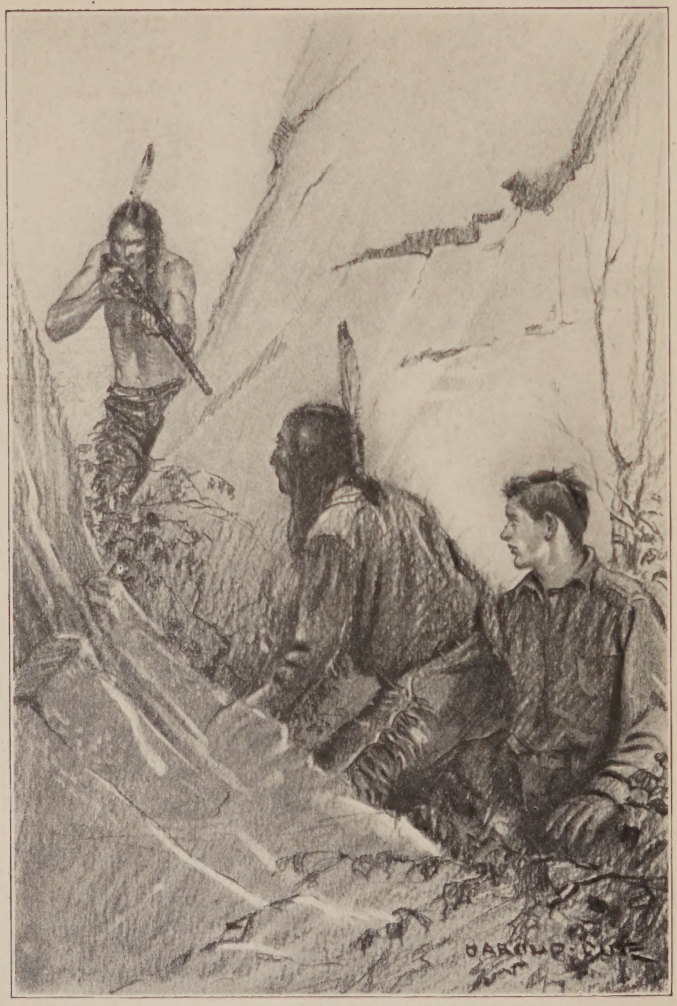

AN INDIAN STEPPED OUT AND COVERED THEM WITH HIS GUN (*page* 174)

THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

INJUN AND WHITEY STRIKE OUT FOR THEMSELVES

BY

WILLIAM S. HART

AUTHOR OF "INJUN AND WHITEY"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAROLD CUE

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PREFACE

Across the sky were fleeting clouds which seemed to blend in with the thoughts of a boy that stood, his hands clasped in the hand of his father, on a small station platform in the Dakota Territory in the early eighties.

As the boy stood silent and afraid, waiting for the big giant of the rails that was to come and take him far away from the country of which he was a part, he could hear the cluck of the prairie chickens as they walked unmolested within fifty yards of the station; he could see a mile distant a low line of poplars that fringed in yellow waves the young river that leapt down the gorge and smiled in happiness as it passed. He could see along the great line of the horizon wild geese flying swiftly south, for it was the late fall of the year when the buffalo grass sighed and looked from right to left waiting for Nature, the Boss Reaper, to come along and take her toll. He could see the red sun wending its downward course where it was to set alone in silence.

O God! the greatness, the bigness of it all! That tremendous prairie was the only mistress this boy would ever know.

Then there came to the boy a seeming vibration in the air as though Nature was trembling and knew not why. But it was the giant of the rails that was coming. It was the end.

"Dad, aren't we ever coming back?" asked the boy.

"I don't know, son. Only God knows that."

And the giant came, and the boy went away, and the poplars waved, and the river smiled, and the boy never did come back — but he is trying to now through

THE AUTHOR

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INJUN AND WHITEY STRIKE OUT FOR THEMSELVES

CHAPTER I

A TELEGRAM

"WELL, if that isn't hard luck," said Whitey Sherwood, disgustedly, as he went over and leaned against a post of the corral, "then I'd like to have somebody tell me what is!"

To those who have followed the adventures of Injun and Whitey in the first book of "The Golden West Series," it will be remembered that they had planned to explore the wild region over beyond Moose Lake, where they had succeeded in capturing Pedro, after a desperate struggle in the waters of the lake and had brought him back to the ranch, and, eventually, had secured the reward offered for his capture. When they had mentioned their intention to Bill Jordan,

the foreman of Mr. Sherwood's ranch, he had immediately become interested in the expedition. Bill had, at one time, been a gold prospector, and once the lure of gold-hunting gets into a man's system, it is hard to get it out, and it usually remains with him until the end of his days.

Bill had shown them a piece of gold ore, which, singularly enough, had come from this very region; although, he had added, lest the boys might imagine that they could walk over there and locate a mine any afternoon, "This here piece o' ore is prob'ly th' only chunk o' gold the good Lord ever put in them mountains! Nobody's ever bin able t' find any more of it, an' prospectors has bin givin' th' place th' go-by fer th' last ten years."

But as the main object of the boys' expedition was not the finding of gold, but rather adventure, they were not particularly discouraged. What they were looking for was excitement, in any form that it might present itself; though, of course, if a good, healthy gold-mine came along, they would probably stop long enough to pick it up.

But now, the whole project seemed to have been knocked in the head. Mr. Sherwood, Whitey's father, had been called East to attend to some business, and had left Whitey in Bill Jordan's charge; and while Bill wasn't by any means a strict disciplinarian and allowed Whitey to do about as he pleased, yet he considered that it was, perhaps, inadvisable to allow two fifteen-year-old boys to go alone into so wild a region as that beyond Moose Lake. And for this reason he decided to accompany them. The ranch, as Bill said, was a good deal of "a pianola proposition" — it ran itself. Walker, one of the hands, was a most capable man to fill Bill's shoes, for a time, at least; and then, probably, not the smallest of the reasons that induced Bill to decide to accompany the boys was the itching he had to get back into the prospecting game, even if but for a few days.

The cause of Whitey's disgusted exclamation was a telegram which had just been handed to Bill within a few hours before the expedition was scheduled to start. It was from Mr. Sherwood, in New York, and requested Bill to take the first

train for the East to help him in some negotiations in regard to the ranch business.

Judging by the look on Bill's face he was about as disappointed as the boys, and he stood for a moment, the telegram in his hand, thinking it over.

"Wal," drawled Bill, "I'll say it is, too! But orders is orders, you know, an' when the Boss fiddles, we all gotta dance, whether we like the tune er not! I ain't none too stuck on roamin' 'round thet Big Camp-on-the-Subway, bein' some nervous an' timid like. Them tall four an' five-story buildin's never looked t' me t' be safe, an' th' sidewalks does shore hurt my feet!"

"Were you ever East before, Mr. Jordan?" asked Whitey, grinning.

"Sure," said Bill, with a blasé air; "I was way back East as fur as Cheyenne, one time. But I didn't cotton to it none — no effete civilization like they got in Omaha an' them places fer mine! Me an' th' West is wedded, an' when I git on that train I'll feel like I was elopin'! I ain't gonna feel comf'table fer a minnit, messin' 'round 'mong them hoss-cars an' Henry Fords

an' p'leecemen an' sech. It's takin' too many chances fer a man like me, an' I won't feel real safe till I'm back here runnin' down cattle-rus'lers er breakin' hosses, er mebbe exterminatin' grizzlies an' rattlers."

Under ordinary circumstances Whitey would probably have laughed at Bill's idea of safety, but he couldn't raise anything more than a sickly smile on this occasion.

Injun stood near by, and gave vent to no expression of disappointment either in his face or by words; that is an Indian's way, and he is seldom very demonstrative; but there could be no doubt that he didn't like the turn matters had taken. The going into the wilds was, to him, an everyday affair, and had been, almost since his infancy. He had always taken care of himself and he would have no misgivings about riding into the mountains beyond Moose Lake alone. But he felt that with Whitey the case was different, though he couldn't quite understand it. White folks have a lot of strange ideas about boys, anyway, according to Injun's way of thinking, as he, himself, was beginning to find out.

When the reward of two thousand dollars for the capture of Pedro had been paid to the boys, Bill Jordan had been appointed the Indian boy's guardian to care for his share, which was a thousand dollars. Of course, Injun had no idea of the value of money and would have scattered it to the winds in no time had the disposal of it been left to him; probably a thousand dollars' worth of red flannels or fish-hooks would have been his idea of getting the worth of his money! But Bill Jordan and Mr. Sherwood had consulted about the boy's future, and had determined that the bulk of it should be used for Injun's education at Carlisle or some other good school.

It was natural that Bill, being guardian of the boy's money, should extend a little of his guardianship to the boy's person as well. For Injun was popular with the ranchmen, not only because he was a likable boy and Whitey's pal, but because of the great service he had rendered them at one time or another. And so, in addition to being Injun's "banker," Bill acted in a parental way, too. Bill did not believe in *for-*

bidding a boy to do things; his method was to reason it out with him and show him *why* a certain course was either good or bad — then *let the boy decide for himself.* (I am not saying whether this is the right way or the wrong way — every parent or guardian must decide that himself; but if *results* count for anything, it seems to me a pretty good way.)

So the three sat out by the corral and looked at each other. At length it seemed to Whitey that Bill might be waiting for a suggestion, and a faint hope revived within him.

"I suppose that settles our going, doesn't it, Mr. Jordan?" he asked.

"Wal," said Bill, slowly, "I dunno. What do you think about it? I don't like to say y' *can't* go. Fact is, I guess I ain't got no right t' say it! Yo're yer own boss — I'm only actin' in a 'dvis'ry c'pacity, like I said when yo'r pa went East. I will say thet there's a heap o' oncivilization out there 'mong them mountains over beyond Moose Lake. Why don't yo' all ride over to th' junction an' get 'bout two dollars' wo'th o' lollypops an' go an' set into a movin'-pitcher

show instead? Now th' las' time I was over there, I seen a swell pitcher — it was all about a fluffy-ruffles li'l' gal thet —"

"Well, we've taken pretty good care of ourselves up to date, haven't we?" interrupted Whitey, ignoring the lollypop-moving-picture proposition.

"Wal," said Bill, deliberating for a time, "outside o' causin' me an' yo'r pa to sprout a consider'ble crop o' goose-flesh an' gray hairs 'count o' bein' oneasy in our minds, I reckon yo'r record's fair — better 'n some, mebbe." And to Whitey's practiced eye, Bill seemed to show signs of weakening.

"We didn't get the worst of it when we tackled Ross and the rustlers; nor with Pedro, either! We aren't going to run up against anything worse than that. We aren't going to go up and kick a grizzly in the ribs or try to twist a mountain lion's tail just to hear him yowl! And after my experience with rattlers, I'm not going to try to make a pet of one! What else is there that can hurt us? Besides, if somebody *has* to go with us, why can't Walker or Charley Bassett go?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Bill, hastily, grinning at Walker, who stood near by, "Walker an' Bassett ain't nuthin' but two innercent an' do-cile growed-up men, an' 'twouldn't be fair to use 'em all up follerin' yo' two r'arin' catamounts into all kinds o' dangerous peril an' sech! Have a heart! Them two men was brung up pets an' ain't used t' bein' spoke harsh to an' treated rough an' all like thet!"

"Yes," said Whitey, with a grin, "Walker and Bassett *are* a couple of delicate little things!" (Both men were more than six feet tall and weighed in the neighborhood of a hundred and ninety!) "It would be a shame to subject them to any hardships following Injun and me! Please forget it, Mr. Jordan! What I want to know is, do we go, or don't we?"

"Wal," said Jordan, slowly, "it's like I said first-off — I ain't sayin' y' *can't*. I dunno but I'm runnin' a heap more resk goin' down t' Noo Yawk 'mong them hossless hoss-cars an' railroads set up on top o' sticks, an' th' hull place chuck full o' financeers an' pick-pockets an' Republicans! Whut do yo' think 'bout it, Walker?"

"Who? Me?" said Walker, as he rolled a cigarette. "'F yo' askin' me whut I think, I think I'd a heap sight ruther hev th' kids' chanst 'n I would yo'rn. Them boys'll come through 'ith spangles on 'em; but some galoot'll take yo' 'fore yo' bin in th' Big Town long 'nuff t' register. 'F them Fo'ty-Second Street pirates gits word yo're comin', I kin see 'em gittin' out the gol' brick an' polishin' 'er up, an' workin' overtime printin' oil-stock an' green-goods circ'lars. 'Tain't no hundred t' one some o' them smooth guys don't sell yo' th' keys t' Central Park!"

"Was yo' speakin' frum experience?" asked Jordan, innocently.

"Wal," answered Walker, after a pause, looking skyward, and blowing out a big whiff of smoke, "'twouldn't s'prise me none 'f we hed a fine day, t'-morrer, mebbe."

"Haw, haw!" laughed Bill, as he softly hummed:

"The Bowery! The Bowery!
I'll never go there any more!"

"Wal," Bill went on, "now 't yo've warned

me, I won't buy no keys t' no parks, ner no near-gold bricks, ner no oil-stock; an' 'f I kin only remember not t' blow out th' gas an' not walk no place but in th' middle o' th' road, mebbe I'll come through 'thout losin' my back teeth."

"Bill," said Walker, solemnly, "the' 's guys in Noo Yawk c'n steal th' vest off'n yo' while yo' got a overcoat on!"

"Haw! I'll fool 'em!" laughed Bill. "They can't pull thet one on me, anyhow! I don't wear no overcoat!"

"Yeah! I know!" said Walker. "I s'pose thet'd make it harder! An' 'f yo' was t' stick yo'r head in th' sand like a ostrich, they couldn't see yo' neither?"

"All very interesting, if true," said Whitey, "but what about Injun and me? Do we go?"

"Son," said Bill, "an' yo', too, Lo," looking at Injun, "yo' all hes heard Walker tell how calam'ty an' deestruction overtakes them as rushes in where fools dares t' tread, as the Good Book says. Yo' all jest heared how this here Walker person done rushed int' Noo Yawk an' they slipped him th' work an' he cum away frum

there a heap sadder, but 'tain't likely he was no wiser — him bein' thick an' hard t' learn. So, ef in th' face of a harrowin' an' heart-rendin' narrative like his'n, yo' all is plumb sot on lammin' over t' them mount'ns, I ain't th' one t' say yo' nay. Ef yo' all done cast th' dice, th' bet goes as she lays."

"I reckon all them languages he jes' spilled means 'yes,'" said Walker. "Bill is shore some prodigal when it comes to sheddin' parts o' speech — some folks'd call it bein' windy."

"I've took notice frequent thet folks as never hed no eddication whatsumever," said Bill, looking haughtily at Walker and winking at the boys, "is jellus of an' scoffs at them as hes."

"Is thet so?" drawled Walker. "Why, I seen a fellow down t' San Antone thet had a eddicated hog c'd give yo' cyards an' spa—"

"Jim," said Jordan, playfully jamming Walker's hat down over his eyes and ducking a swing that the latter made at him, "I can't set here an' listen to none o' yo'r fambly hist'ry, tho' I'm glad t' know one of 'em was eddicated, even 'f he did live in San Antone! I gotta go an' see

'bout gittin' these here two Ramrods grubstaked fer the trip."

"Haw!" roared Walker, sarcastically. "*Ramrods*, eh?"

"Whut's th' matter 'ith 'Ramrods'?" asked Bill. "Thet's whut they call hunters, ain't it — Ramrods? Somethin' t' do 'ith a gun, ain't it? An' they use guns fer huntin', don't they?"

"Thet eddicated hog down t' San Antone tol' me 'twas 'Nimrods,'" said Walker; "an' huccum yo' t' set yo'se'f up t' compete 'ith him?"

"I reckon yo' an' th' hawg wins, Walker," said Bill, scratching his head; "mebbe 'tis 'Nimrods,' now 't I cum t' think of it; but not havin' yo'r nacheral advantages o' knowin' hog-talk, I guess I'll hev t' take my hat off t' yo' an' yo'r friend."

And before Walker could think of a hot comeback, Bill had gathered a boy under each arm, and was hurrying toward the ranch house.

CHAPTER II

THE BOYS GIVE A PROMISE

It took but little time to complete the outfit for the boys, only such food being selected as was compact and substantial, but there was enough of it to last about three weeks. Whatever they were to eat in addition to this they must get for themselves from the woods and streams. One change which Bill Jordan suggested and which was quickly adopted by the boys was the substitution of larger caliber rifles, a 30-30 taking the place of the former .22; and in addition to this, a shot-gun for small game, and two .38 caliber six-guns were added. The equipment was securely strapped upon the back of a sturdy pack-horse, and the expedition was ready to start.

The ranchmen gathered around to give the boys a send-off, and many were the suggestions made and much advice, good and bad, given to them.

"Now, remember," said Walker, "'f a grizzly

gits yo' all treed, jes' send me a postal-cyard, an' I'll come over an' give yo' all a hand!"

"Well," promised Whitey, grinning, "if a grizzly does get *both* of us up a tree at the same time, I'll telegraph you by wireless!"

"'Tain't likely yo' all'll run acrost our ol' friend Pedro over there," said Charley Bassett, who came up at that moment, having just ridden in from town; "but 'f yo' do, bring him back an' we'll photograft him ag'in, like we done."

"Whut d' y' mean 'photograft him ag'in'?" asked Jordan. "Pedro's in jail, waitin' t' be hung."

"Not so's y' could notice it, he ain't!" said Bassett, dryly. "He *were* — a few days ago — but he kissed 'em all good-bye an' vamoosed. 'Pears like they can't find hide ner hair o' the skunk!"

"Is there another reward offered for his capture?" asked Whitey, eagerly. Injun, too, moved up closer; he was as much interested as any one; perhaps more so, as it was against him that Pedro's wrath had first been directed.

"Wal, will y' listen t' thet there kid!" ex-

claimed Bill Jordan. "An' look at this other one edgin' in! 'Are there any reward offered!' Can y' beat it? I b'leeve them two kids'd start right out now an' try t' corral thet hombrey 'f I was t' let 'em — which I ain't! Thet's one place whar I puts my foot down! 'F yo' all don't promise me yo' won't go messin' 'round 'ith thet varmint, right here's where th' hull expedition ends!"

"Well, if we *did* run across him, oughtn't we to go get him and bring him in?" asked Whitey. "It looks to me as though it would be more dangerous to try to avoid him than it would be to go get him."

"Yo' said somethin', kid!" commented Walker. "But 'f yo' meets up 'ith him, don't waste no time capturin' him — settle him, right thar! Like we should 'a' done when we had him, 'f it hadn't 'a' bin fer ol' Law-an'-Order here!" looking reproachfully at Jordan. "Now, it's gotta be all did over ag'in!"

(It will be remembered that the ranchmen, Walker in particular, were anxious to lynch Pedro when Injun and Whitey captured him and brought him back to the ranch. But Jordan had

interfered and prevented this, claiming that Law and Order must be preserved.)

"I done whut was right, an' yo' know it, Walker!" said Bill, a little hotly. "Th' trouble is with them jail-people — they must be a fine outfit t' let thet bird giv' 'em th' slip! But thet ain't neither here ner thar — th' p'int is, these here kids has got t' gimme their word they *won't go lookin'* fer th' critter! O' co'se 'f they meets up with him, th' onlies' thing t' be did is t' plug him first — then they kin go an' capture him all they want! I dunno's I oughta let 'em go a-tall," he added, doubtfully.

Alarmed at this latter remark, Whitey hastily promised that they would not seek a meeting with Pedro, and he turned to Injun for corroboration; but Injun seemed in no hurry to comply, but sat stolidly on his pinto and grimly fingered the lock of his rifle.

"Me plug 'im!" he growled.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bassett. "Yo' plug him, kid, an' plug him good!"

"Ef thet kid starts out to git Pedro, I'll take a ticket on th' kid," announced Walker. "He

knows more ways o' trailin' an' hidin' an' ambushin' an' all sech 'n Pedro er his hull fambly'll ever know!"

"Mebbe!" said Jordan, with firmness and decision. "But jest recollect t' remember thet Whitey's *with* him. 'F yo' was t' giv' Injun an' Pedro a gun apiece an' turn 'em loose in th' mount'ns, I hain't a doubt Injun'd git him shore. But — I don't intend fer them two to do no stalkin' an' capturin' o' thet pizen critter, an' thet settles it! 'F they runs onto him — an' 'tain't 't all likely they will — Pedro's done beat it North — all right — let him have it, pronto! Empty them guns into his pizen carcass an' then climb a tree an' set thar fer 'bout a hour. 'F he don't make no move by thet time, come down frum th' tree an' beat it th' other way's fast as yo' kin leg it. Them's my instructions! But as fer startin' out an' tryin' deliberate t' cross his trail — nuthin' doin'! An' yo' all gotta promise me thet, er th' start o' this here trip is apt t' be delayed right consider'ble! Is it a bet?"

After some urging on Whitey's part, Injun grudgingly agreed that he would not seek a

meeting with Pedro, and this satisfied Jordan. But it was certain that neither of the boys would avoid a meeting with the man, and, in fact, would welcome it. And it was not altogether without misgivings that Jordan saw the boys start. In fact, had it not seemed probable that Pedro had made for Canada, or some equally distant place, it is doubtful if Bill would have given his permission at all. The entire region roundabout knew of Pedro and his doings, and his only hope of safety lay in getting as far away as possible. One reason only argued that the man might remain in the vicinity, and that was his deep and abiding thirst for revenge; but Jordan figured that Pedro would forego even that when it could be had only at so great a risk.

"Don't fergit to bring back somethin'!" Bill called to the boys as they rode out of the corral. "Even a real good gold-mine'll do!" he added.

"Sure thing!" Whitey answered. "You told us to bring back something when we went out before, and we did. And I guess we can again — even if it's nothing more than a gold-mine! That ought to help some!"

"Is them kids aimin' to go prospectin', Bill?" asked Walker, grinning. "I didn't see no prospectin' outfit."

"No," said Bill, a little ruefully, "I was goin' to do thet. They was speakin' 'bout gold-mines t'other day, wonderin' 'f the' was any over t' th' mount'ns, and I got all het up 'bout it — th' old fever come back on me, and I shore would 'a' like t' went. But this here telegraft put th' kibosh onto it. They're jest roamin' 'round studyin' 'bout how much mischief they kin git into. I dunno's I had oughta let 'em go," he added, doubtfully, after a pause, "but I hated t' say 'no,' at th' last minnit, they bein' so sot onto it."

"Shucks!" laughed Walker. "'F I was you, I'd be a heap sight more worried 'bout goin' to Noo Yawk 'n I would be 'bout them boys. The' ain't no more danger in them goin' into th' mount'ns 'n the' is ef yo' an' me went."

"Wal," said Bill, "I sort o' figgered it thet way, too; but I don't like this idee o' Pedro bein' loose. The' ain' no tellin' whar thet skunk's li'ble t' show up."

CHAPTER III

A FOREST FIRE

"WELL," said Whitey, as he threw back his shoulders and took a deep breath of the fresh air, "here we are at last! I never would have believed these mountains were so far from the ranch!"

It was well along toward evening of the second day's ride; they had left the grassy plains far behind and were now among the rocky gorges and knobs that furrowed and roughened the base of the mountain-range. They had decided to camp in a thick patch of trees under the shadow of a tall and slightly overhanging cliff, near which ran a small but very rapid rill that tumbled and splashed its shallow way toward the plains, interrupted, here and there, by a series of falls like steps of varying heights. And although it lacked two hours or more of sunset, in the long shadow of the cliff it seemed almost like twilight and there was a distinct chill in the air. The horses had been

hobbled and turned loose, and Injun soon had a fire going; and in a few moments the appetizing odors of frying bacon and boiling coffee permeated the air. "Hunger is the best sauce," and the boys, tired from their long ride, fell to like a couple of longshoremen, and soon both plates and cups, although replenished more than once, were empty. Whitey washed the pans and skillet in the stream while Injun got out the blankets; for although it was not yet dark, both boys were entirely willing to tumble in. Roll in would, perhaps, express it better; for the boys had nothing more in the way of a bed than the thick, soft moss, and rolled themselves in their blankets upon it.

For a time they lay and watched the stars come out, one by one, until the whole heavens were ablaze, and then sleep closed their eyes. What better bed could any one ask? They were bedded upon old Mother Earth! To Whitey it was new because he was an alien, but to the Indian boy, although unknown to him, it was part of his nature, part of the birthrights of his people. The plains Indians are born upon the ground.

Old Sitting Bull, a great chief and medicine man of the Sioux Indians, just before his death, owned a log cabin and a bed — yet he went outside and spread his blanket upon the ground knowing that death was near. And who can deny but that much of the Indians' rugged nature is gained from this contact with Mother Earth? I am not advocating this custom for white people because they are not accustomed to it, and I would not advise sleeping upon the ground unless common sense is used because there is an after-effect for those whose constitutions rebel. It is called rheumatism.

Two days in the saddle, over such country as the boys had traversed, will put a few kinks in the muscles of even a hardened plainsman; but the night's rest, in contact with Mother Earth, and a cold bath in the little stream that tumbled down past the glade, put the boys in fine fettle. And if anything was necessary to make it finer, the corn-bread, bacon, and coffee supplied it.

"Gee!" said Whitey, as he took the last piece of bacon from the skillet and put it on his birch-bark plate, "seems to me you're mighty stingy

with the rations! To-morrow morning I'm going to do the cooking."

Injun grinned and made no objection — in fact, he would probably have been willing that Whitey should cook all the time. The job of camp-cook is not altogether an enviable one, and Injun was not a very hearty eater. He, like most other Indians, was a good deal of a philosopher, and he seemed to be able to adjust his appetite to the supply. If there was plenty, all right. If there was nothing — all right, too! And what was more, he could go a much longer time than any white boy with nothing to eat at all. No doubt he had had considerable practice at this; for in his long wanderings he was always dependent upon his own efforts for food; and many and many a time he had lain down at night with no comfort for his stomach but a tightened belt.

The boy was, like all his race, stoical and reserved; he might be almost starving and no one would have guessed it. He would come into a white man's camp or lodge, ravenously hungry, and if he were not urged to "sit in," or if they were at all unfriendly, he would have watched

the others eat without betraying the slightest desire to partake.

This characteristic was and is by no means uncommon, however, in many parts of the West, nor is it confined to Indians. Many a white man would and will do the same thing; and, possibly, that is the reason why, in Western camp or home, city or wilds, something to eat is offered the arriving guest immediately. He has usually come a long way, and *probably* is hungry — but seldom so hungry that he'll ask for food.

"There!" said Whitey, as he drained the last drop of coffee from the tin cup, and threw it playfully at Injun, who ducked adroitly, "I guess I can live till noon! Where do we go from here?"

Injun pointed up the mountain, and began to gather together the few utensils that they had used at breakfast. This done he carefully stamped out the still glowing embers of the fire until not a spark remained.

"Why do we go up the mountain?" asked Whitey. "So that we can see how the land lies?"

Injun nodded. The boys had no knowledge of

the vast region that lay beyond the ridge, and it was necessary to do a little exploring in order to locate a suitable permanent camp or headquarters. They knew there were numerous streams and some lakes, but they had to be found — that was part of the fun. If you know exactly what you are going to find over a ridge or at the end of a gorge, much of the fascination of a trip of this kind is gone. In traversing the unknown wilds there is a surprise at every turn that gives zest to the explorer and impels him to keep on to see what lies beyond. There is, also, the joy and exultation that high-spirited boys or men feel in matching their powers against Nature's obstacles.

It would have been futile, on account of the horses, to have proceeded straight up the mountain. Such a course would inevitably have landed them in serious difficulties, and would have meant very hard work. So Injun skirted the base of the mountain, gradually ascending like the spiral of a screw, and picking the way carefully. Occasionally they were forced to make wide detours to avoid a sheer cliff or a deep gorge, but generally managing to keep in their intended di-

rection. By noon they had reached a point high up the mountain from which the country to the northwest lay spread out like a panorama before them.

The valley, some ten miles wide, seemed like a deep cut between the two ridges. Here and there they caught the gleam of the blue waters of a small lake, and down the sides of the hills swift and narrow streams splashed and tumbled. Over the greater part of the landscape the timber was thin; but there were patches of wood, some of them many miles in extent, and increasing in density as they neared the valley.

For a long time Whitey stood fascinated by the scene. The air was so clear that objects at great distances were clearly outlined.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, "I'll bet there is plenty of game around here! It doesn't look as though anybody had ever set foot in this region."

Injun grinned; and for an answer he pointed to a spot in the valley on the extreme right of where they stood, and possibly four or five miles away. Whitey followed the direction of Injun's finger, and was able to make out a thin ribbon

of blue smoke that rose straight up into the air.

"What is that — somebody's camp-fire?" asked Whitey.

Injun shook his head, and continued to regard the smoke intently; and as the two boys watched the smoke could be seen to increase in volume. In a few moments a small tongue of flame shot up above the tree-tops and the smoke darkened a little.

"It must be a forest fire!" said Whitey, excitedly. "The wind is blowing this way, too! With everything as dry as it is it ought to be some fire! How do those things start?"

Injun shrugged his shoulders. "Mebbe white man go 'way leave camp-fire. Mebbe can't tell — jes' start."

"Spontaneous combustion, eh?"

Injun looked at Whitey dazedly and reproachfully. Why pull anything like that on him? "Dunno," he said.

It was Whitey's turn to grin — he wasn't exactly sure that he knew, himself.

"Why do you say 'white man' left his fire and

it spread? Don't Indians ever go away and leave a fire?"

Injun shook his head decidedly. "Injun don't."

"Like you did this morning, eh? There didn't seem to be any danger of our fire spreading," said Whitey, as though he felt that Injun was inclined to be over-cautious.

Injun shrugged his shoulders and pointed at the fire which was spreading rapidly. "Mebbe white man think like dat too," he said. "Fores' fire bad med'cine!"

"Bad medicine" is right — as any one who has ever been mixed up in a forest fire will testify. In the dry season of the year, at which time a forest fire almost invariably occurs, it spreads with incredible rapidity. After it has gained a certain headway, trees, and whole patches of trees, upon which it would seem no particle of spark had lit, burst into flame like a powder magazine set off by electricity. In some way the fire leaps gaps and crosses water over long distances, and it goes hard with any man or any thing that is caught within the possible area of its extent.

Few people have any idea of how fast a forest fire or a prairie fire spreads. It might be supposed that an active man, knowing that the fire is approaching, could easily get out of its reach; but often such is not the case, and he is outstripped and overwhelmed. The fire, itself, is as appalling as it is irresistible. Beasts flee from it in the utmost terror and panic, forgetting all else than the idea of escape. The mountain lion bounds along beside the rabbit, and the timber wolf beside the fawn, and neither gives a thought to the other! Men at long distances from the fire have been saved by this very fact. The rush of the denizens of the wood goes past them — even an animal's fear of man is disregarded — and the woodsman knows what this means and he seeks safety.

And here, too, that mysterious thing, animal instinct, plays a great part. In some way most animals — perhaps all — have a sort of sixth sense — the sense that warns them of danger. They do not need to see or hear or smell it — they simply *know!* No freak of Nature, however sudden — an earthquake, a volcanic eruption, a

tidal wave, a cloudburst, or a forest fire — comes upon them unwarned! They seem to know it in advance! This is no guesswork with them. Hours before an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, animals have been known to leave the spot to be affected. Before an unusually long and severe winter, the bees store up more honey and the squirrel lays up a much larger quantity of feed than usual. The beaver builds a warmer home, and the migration of the birds toward the south begins earlier. The wisdom of the groundhog as a weather prophet is pretty well acknowledged.

"For beast and bird
Have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not."

Any time a man gets chesty and begins to think that he knows it all, let him get out on to the plains or the desert or into the mountains, and see how he feels about it then!

As the boys watched, the column of smoke that rose straight up into the air not only became denser and darker, but it began to lose its columnar shape and to broaden and spread until it became almost a curtain. The tongues of

flame became more and more vivid and frequent, and the area of the fire greater and greater, and the spread was toward them.

"Great Day!" said Whitey. "It can't possibly get as far as this, can it?" he asked.

But getting no reply from Injun, he turned and found that the latter was not standing beside him, but had gone back to where the horses had been left, under the brow of a cliff and *entirely out of sight of the fire.* Whitey hastened to join him, and found Injun tethering them all securely to a tree. Whitey was somewhat astonished, for he knew that Injun's pinto never needed this, whatever his own horse, Monty, or the pack-horse might require.

"What's the idea?" asked Whitey.

For reply Injun simply shrugged his shoulders and took an extra hitch in the lariat; and Whitey saw that all the animals were unquestionably nervous and restless and apprehensive, the pinto, if anything, more so than the others.

Then it dawned on Whitey. "Can you beat that?" he asked, in wonder. "Here those horses are, out of sound or sight or smell of the fire,

and yet they know about it! I guess you've got to hand it to a horse!"

"You see plenty animal soon," said Injun, enigmatically. "You come!"

Injun led the way back to where they had stood but a few moments before, and Whitey was aghast at the headway that the fire had gained. It had spread, not only laterally, so that it now encompassed an area nearly a mile in width, but it had approached them, before the wind, far more than that distance.

Within a short time, too, Injun's prophecy was fulfilled — the rush of animals had begun. Through the sparse timber below them many animals could be seen in a mad race for safety, and the air was filled with flying birds. First came the rabbits, foxes, and some smaller animals, in a wild scramble and scurry, with an occasional deer that outstripped them all with great bounds that often measured twenty feet. Two mountain lions followed, making a few bounds, and then stopping and turning their heads to look back spitefully, and then leap on again. In their wake lumbered a bear in a busi-

nesslike way, paying no attention to what went on around him, but devoting all his energies to putting as great a distance between himself and the fire as he could. With a few exceptions the animals were all making for the upland where the timber became thinner as the top of the ridge was approached.

"Gee!" said Whitey, all excitement. "The fire is driving the game toward us! Shall we take a crack at something if it gets near enough?"

Injun shook his head. "No hurt him when he in trouble — bad medicine!" he said. "We run, too!" and turned to go back to where the horses had been left.

"What for?" asked Whitey. "It doesn't seem possible that the fire can reach us here!" he protested.

But Injun knew better. They were by no means above the timber-line of the mountain, for their spiral climb had taken them little more than halfway to the summit. And while the cliff on which they stood overlooked the valley and was high above the tree-tops immediately below them, yet if the fire should happen to get between them and

the summit they would be hemmed in so that all hope of escape would be lost.

Whitey followed Injun to the horses, and the boys found them in a state bordering on panic. This alone was enough to convince Whitey that the situation demanded action; and it was the work of only a few moments to let loose the animals and start on the way up toward the top.

Even now Whitey could smell the odor of the burning, and the smoke-cloud, carried in their direction by the wind, had begun to creep over their heads.

Encumbered as they were by the horses it was impossible, as before, to go straight up the mountain; and Injun laid their course round to the southeast, and made the spiral a trifle straighter than he had before in the leisurely ascent of the northern side. Had they wished simply to escape the fire they could have gone toward the southeast and down the mountain; but the boys had no idea of doing this, as it would have meant the abandonment of the expedition. Injun felt sure that the fire would not cross the ridge, but would be confined to the northwesterly and westerly

sides; and if they got above the timber-line, they could then proceed along the top or even the easterly side of the ridge, to the point where the fire had begun, and do their hunting and exploring there.

For two hours or more they climbed, the smoke overhead getting thicker and thicker and the smell of the burning pine more and more pronounced; and finally, as they almost encircled the mountain, they came to a point, high above the timber-line, and several hundred feet almost directly over the point at which they had first seen the fire. It was impossible to see for any distance on account of the thick pall of smoke, and it was evident that the fire had swept to the south, even beyond the point at which they had first stood, and that the place, high and sheer as was the cliff above the valley, would be untenable now.

They had not moved any too soon! Even where they now were, high above the timber-line, the horses coughed and sneezed in the smoke, and their own eyes watered with its sting. The heat, too, was appreciable, and exhausted as they were,

Injun did not wait long before starting the march farther up the mountain Such a course would, perhaps, entail some hardships — fodder and water for the horses cannot always be found in the higher altitudes — but it was most uncomfortable where they were, and there was always escape by way of the easterly slope in case things got desperate.

High up on the mountain, far above the timberline, and on its westerly side, the boys camped that night. Far below them raged the fire, which seemed to have spent itself far toward the south. The burned area, some six or seven miles long and from one to two miles in width, lay black in the moonlight, with here and there the glow of the still smouldering embers. Little smoke now reached them, although the pungent smell of the burnt pine was still in their nostrils and the sting of the smoke still irritated their eyes. They were fortunate in finding water, and, all in all, neither the boys nor the horses suffered any very great inconvenience.

CHAPTER IV

A MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

With the first streaks of dawn the boys were up and about. In the daylight the fearful ravages of the fire were more apparent. Hundreds of acres of smouldering embers, blackened stumps, many of them still sending up little curls of smoke, lay below them. It was evident that the burned area could not be crossed for many days. Small streams that had hitherto been invisible on account of the foliage were to be seen in the valley; and far away to the north, just about where the fire had started, the lake, of which they had been able to catch but fleeting glimpses, glistened as the sunlight played upon its blue bosom.

Fortunately the wind had been strong enough to sweep the fire toward the south, and it had gained little headway north of the point at which it had its beginning. Had there been no wind, or even shifting winds, there would have been no telling where the fire would have ended in that direction. Toward the south the smoke-

veil still hung so thick that the limits of the fire could not be discerned — if the fire had indeed been stopped.

Toward the north, then, was obviously their best course. Not only were the woods about and beyond the lake untouched by the fire, but, as Injun pointed out, it would be to that region that the hordes of game that had been driven from their homes by the fire and had taken refuge in the hills would eventually make their way. That ought to make the hunting good.

Down the mountain and along the ridge to the north the boys made their way. As they descended nearer to the burned area, they found that the air was still uncomfortable to eyes and nose and lungs, but they kept moving, although the rough ground made their progress slow on account of the horses, but in something less than three hours they came to a point on the ridge about even with where the fire had started, and began the descent to the valley below in which they had seen the lake.

On several occasions, while on the ridge, they had encountered animals that had taken refuge

there. The animals were still in a state of panic, and even had they encountered a bear or a panther there would have been little to fear. At one point they sighted a fine buck. Whitey looked at Injun, and Injun said, "Him no trouble now. Him in trouble — no shoot! Him spirit come into Injun." So Whitey took a shot at him; but Whitey was the victim of a mysterious disease called "buck fever." Its symptoms are manifested in many ways; frequently, when aiming, the muzzle of the gun keeps going around in a circle. Then again, when suffering from it, a man pulls the trigger on a dead-center shot — only to find that he has not cocked his gun or has forgotten to put a cartridge into it! "Buck fever" is the cause, also, of a high rate of mortality among guides. The guide doesn't kill himself — the man with the "fever" kills him! When a hunter has a severe attack of "buck fever" he is much more apt to plug the guide than he is the deer. If you don't think so, just ask anybody who has been a guide — providing he is still living!

"Gee!" said Whitey, disgustedly, as the buck

went bounding away among the trees after the crack of the Winchester, "what was the matter with me? Did you see how the muzzle of my gun went 'round and 'round when I was aiming at him?"

Injun grinned; he had never had "buck fever" himself. He couldn't afford to have an attack of it — that is, if he wanted to eat regularly, he couldn't.

Before they left the ridge, however, and while they traversed the woods to the north of the burned district, the boys managed to secure a fair bag of rabbits, squirrels, and partridges, thus insuring themselves against a dinner of corn-bread and bacon. Corn-bread and bacon are all right, but after a man has eaten it for several weeks he doesn't mind a change!

It was not yet noon when the boys came to the shores of the lake and looked about for a suitable place to camp. They went northward, along the eastern shore, and soon found an ideal spot. In a small cove, sheltered on three sides by high ground and trees, the land sloped gently down to the water, the pebbly beach making a natural

and convenient landing. Here, too, was grass in abundance for the horses; and it was with a sigh of relief that the boys unloaded their outfit from the pack-horse and threw themselves upon the ground to rest. No doubt the pack-horse felt just as much relieved as the boys did! At any rate, he shook himself and readjusted his skin in different places, snorted and rolled on the soft grass and kicked up his heels, which is my idea of how a horse registers relief.

"Pipe the horse!" said Whitey, as he rolled over on his back lazily. "I guess he isn't glad to get here! To tell the truth, he's got something on me; for he is through and I've got to do a lot of work! Why don't you take it easy, once in a while, Injun? You don't give a feller a chance to rest his bones, but start right in hustling around as though we hadn't a minute to spare. What's the rush?"

Injun, who was busily engaged in unpacking the tent and clearing a space for it, turned and grinned at Whitey. "Me fix 'um!" he said.

"Yes, I know," said Whitey, getting up from the grass. "You'll fix 'um, but I'm not going

to let you do it all. Here," continued Whitey, "let me put up the tent and you take your pick of the game, and skin 'em. I'm so hungry you can make the choice."

Injun grinned and went at the game dexterously with his hunting-knife; and at about the same moment each of the boys had finished his allotted task.

"I don't know as it would be a bad scheme to hook a nice bass for an appetizer," Whitey suggested, grinning at Injun. "Not that we need any appetizer, but it will make it look more like a course dinner. What do you say?"

Injun didn't know anything about course dinners, but he was already engaged in getting out the rods and tackle — he understood what "fishin'" meant.

"By the way, Injun," said Whitey, as they went along the shore of the lake, "can you read?"

"Me ketch 'um fish," responded Injun.

"Sure," said Whitey, "I know that — but what I mean is, can you read anything you see in print — a newspaper, for instance? I don't ever remember seeing you try."

"Know letters," said Injun. "A, b, c, d, e, f, —" he said laboriously in a sing-song tone.

Whitey let him finish the alphabet, which he did correctly. "Great!" said Whitey. "But can you put the letters together — spell? How do you spell cat, for instance?"

"C-a-t," spelled Injun, after deep thought.

"Well, what do you know about that!" complimented Whitey. "Here — what is this?" and with his finger, he traced "DOG" in the sand.

Injun examined it critically and cautiously. "Dog," he said, after some deliberation.

"Say!" said Whitey, "you've been under cover with all that education! Where did you learn all that?"

"Him Bill Jordan," said Injun. "When you go sleep."

"Why didn't you tell me?" asked Whitey, in an injured way. "I could have been lots of help!" And then he added, after a moment's thought, "Why can't we do a little studying while we're out here? Say for about an hour after we eat our supper, every night? You could learn quite a lot if we did that."

This was perfectly agreeable to Injun, and while the boys fished they made plans for a sort of "night-school" in the wilds. The fact that they found the fish of the lake hungry and apparently eager to be caught did not in any way disturb their plan; and that evening, by the light of the camp-fire and of pine knots that blazed in a skillet, the real education of Injun was begun.

The record of the three weeks that followed contained nothing of a remarkable nature, with one exception. The boys hunted and fished, roaming the shores of the lake. Now and then the boys changed their camp, and on one or two occasions they made trips into the mountains away from the lake, and explored the burned district where they never ceased to find examples of woodland tragedy.

Whitey so far recovered from "buck fever" that he managed to secure two fine specimens — the game laws, if indeed there were any, meant nothing in either of their young lives — and they were added to the collection of skins which they had accumulated and which the pack-horse was

destined to carry. They lived well on the fish and game that fell to their bag, and altogether the expedition was voted a decided success.

But as far as excitement or danger went there was little of it. Even the panther whose skin ornamented their pack had given them no trouble; for a bullet from the rifle of each of the boys found a vital spot, and he collapsed before he had time to spring and was dead before he could even give them much of a scare.

But there was one occasion in which the boys were undoubtedly in very great danger, and the whole thing was so shrouded in mystery that neither could do more than guess as to its solution.

On one of the trips back into the mountains the boys had scaled one of the peaks to a point perhaps two thirds of the way to the summit. And as they climbed it was necessary for them to pass along a narrow ledge. The ledge wound around a sheer cliff and at some points was not more than a foot in width. Below there was a drop of perhaps two hundred feet. The passage along this ledge was necessarily slow and re-

quired a good deal of care — about all the attention that it was possible to give it — and at times they were compelled to face the wall of the cliff and edge their way along with their backs to the abyss below them, and holding on to any projection that the face of the cliff offered.

The boys were close together, Injun in the lead, and with their backs to the abyss, when the crack of a rifle rang out from the valley below and a bullet chipped a piece of the rock near to their heads!

To say that they were astonished is putting it mildly! They had no idea that there was a human being within fifty miles or more of them, and that there should be one who desired to kill them was even more amazing. The situation — the peril — of crossing the ledge with every help that could be given was bad enough; but to be on that ledge two hundred feet above the valley and have some one shooting at you was a thousand times worse!

"What do you know about that!" gasped Whitey. "Somebody is shooting at us!"

"You come!" said Injun, digging his fingers

into the rock. "Take time!" he added, knowing that any undue haste would be fatal. Whitey set his teeth and tried to think of nothing else than the passage. But before they had gone ten feet farther another shot sounded, and again the bullet hit the face of the cliff near them.

There remained some twenty-five or thirty feet of the ledge to be crossed before they landed on the side of the mountain, and fortunately this portion of the ledge was slightly wider and some haste was permissible. They managed to get over this and plunged into the timber, no other shot being fired.

Once off the ledge the boys looked at each other, but neither could offer any explanation of the mystery. They went to the edge of the timber near the ledge and scanned the valley closely for almost an hour, but could detect no movement of the brush or among the trees.

"Do you think we better go down there and investigate?" asked Whitey. "I don't like to let anybody get away with a thing like that!"

Injun thought it over. To reach the valley from where they were would entail a re-crossing

of the ledge, and that risk seemed too great to be undertaken at this time. So they decided to return to the camp and keep a sharp lookout during the night; and to determine on the following day what course to adopt in catching their would-be assassin.

Neither of the boys slept in the camp that night, but took turns watching as they lay behind some underbrush a short distance from the tent.

Nothing happened during the night, and no intruder came; and morning gave no solution to the mystery. Nor did the next day, nor the next.

The position of being hunted, especially by an assassin that shoots at your back and while you are in a situation of extreme danger from other sources, is not a pleasant one. And while the boys were by no means frightened out of their wits — the fact that they waited two days longer disposes of that charge — their stay was no longer comfortable. And on the third day following the attempt at their lives, they packed up and started over the back trail.

No incident of any kind marred the trip back,

and on the evening of the second day's travel they once more pitched their camp in the little clump of trees which they had occupied on the night of their arrival.

Supper over, they plunged into the "night-school" business, in which Injun was making great headway; and they turned in early, preparing for their next day's adventure.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER MYSTERY

But it seemed to Whitey that he had no more than fallen asleep than a touch upon his arm awakened him. In reality he had slept several hours, as a glance at the sky told him; for the constellations that had been overhead in the early evening had swung far toward the horizon. The tightening grip of Injun's hand on Whitey's arm warned him not to speak, and Whitey rose on his elbow, his other hand grasping the rifle, and listened.

A little way down the slope, not more than fifty yards below the thick patch of timber in which the boys were encamped, Whitey could hear the crunching of gravel and the rattle of stones as they rolled down the declivity dislodged by horses' feet as they passed; and judging by the sounds a considerable number must have gone by. Judging by the sounds, also, it was apparent to Whitey that the band, whatever it was, was going into the mountains in the same

general direction that the boys intended to take. The absence of talk and of any other sound than that which the horses made led Whitey to the belief that it was a band of Indians.

"Who are they?" he whispered to his companion.

"Injun," answered the boy, as he started toward the edge of the timber crawling on hands and knees, with Whitey following him in the same manner. As he passed the horses Whitey realized that all the caution in the world on his part and Injun's would avail nothing to prevent discovery of their presence if one of the horses whinnied. He rose silently and stood by his own horse, Monty, and discovered that Injun had been awake for some time before he had roused him, and had already provided for this very contingency. Around each of the horses' noses was a thong which held the horse's mouth closed and prevented the animal from saying "Good evening!" to a passing friend.

Satisfied that there was no danger of discovery from this source, Whitey again dropped to the ground and crawled to the edge of the timber

at Injun's side. Below them, in the shadows, Whitey could make out what looked to be about a dozen men — he could not distinguish them to be Indians at that distance and in that light — some riding and some leading their horses along the trail. The two boys watched them in silence until they were out of sight and hearing, and then Whitey turned to his companion.

"What are they doing here?" he asked.

"Dunno," answered Injun. "No good!"

"You mean that they are here for no good purpose?"

Injun grunted assent. "Him mebbe steal! Dunno! Fin' out."

"You mean that you are going to follow them and find out what their game is?" asked Whitey. "How do you know they are 'no good'? Maybe they are out on a hunt of some kind?"

Injun shook his head. "Injun no travel night like him 'less do bad bus'ness. Injun no hunt like dat — him mebbe steal. Mebbe bust out. No good!"

It was clearly evident that Injun was convinced that the band of Indians were bent on

some sort of mischief, and as Whitey knew that the boy seldom erred in his judgment in matters of woodcraft, or in those things that pertained to his own race, he was not inclined to dispute it; and he was entirely willing that Injun should direct their course of action.

"Were they Indians of your tribe, Injun?" Whitey inquired.

Injun shook his head decidedly; the boys on this occasion had skirted the shores of Moose Lake and had come into the mountains from a somewhat northerly direction. Had the band been Injun's tribe he knew that they would not have taken the long way 'round as the boys had done to get to this point in the mountains. Furthermore, had there been any such concerted action contemplated by Injun's own people he would have known of it in some way.

For some moments after the band of Indians had passed, Injun stood looking and listening. His glance not only followed the band, but he also scanned the horizon as if looking for something. And in a few moments his search seemed to be rewarded. High up on one of the peaks

to the west a gleam of light showed, and the grunt of satisfaction that Injun gave showed that he had been looking for some such thing as this. Whitey, too, saw it, and turned questioningly to his companion.

"What's that?" he asked, in an excited whisper.

"Dunno," said Injun. "Mebbe him signal — come same place!" added Injun with seriousness, and as though the matter was of great importance.

"You mean that various bands of Indians are meeting for some purpose? Something that they intend to combine on?"

Injun was not sure. "Dunno," he said. Then he added, as he started to turn back toward the camp, "No good!"

CHAPTER VI

ON THE TRAIL OF THE INDIANS

It was evident from Injun's manner that he intended to follow the band that had just passed, and that he did not intend to use any of the horses in the pursuit. The spot where they had camped was an ideal one, in that not only were there food and water in abundance for the animals, and which they could get for themselves, but it was somewhat off the trail, and the thick growth of timber furnished admirable concealment. Injun hobbled the pack-horse as well as Monty and the pinto. In fact, it is probable that the pinto did not need even these; for he had learned by long training at the hands of Injun that the best thing he could do was to stay "where he was put." Monty, on account of several months of close association with the pinto, was beginning to find out this, too.

The spring near by and the excellent grazing ground made it safe for them to leave their

horses even for an indefinite period, provided, of course, they were not molested by humans. And, to the best of the boys' knowledge, they were not leaving on an extended trip.

"What shall we take with us?" asked Whitey, as he watched the preparations that Injun was making.

"Him stay here," suggested the latter, although his tone was not that of a command or injunction. Injun knew that Whitey did not have his own skill in trailing or in avoiding detection, and he felt that the white boy would, necessarily, be subjected to many dangers which were of no moment to himself.

"Yes," said Whitey, derisively, "I've got a photograph of myself sitting here with these horses and letting you have all the fun! If you think I'm going to do that, you've got another guess coming to you! Unless," he added, a little ruefully, "unless you think I'm going to be in the way, and may spill the beans?"

For an answer Injun cut off two big hunks of bacon and, wrapping them up with two loaves of bread, he handed one to Whitey. This done,

he took up his rifle, revolver, and belt, which he made sure was full of cartridges, as well as the magazines of his weapons, and he was ready to go. Similarly equipped, Whitey fell in behind Injun as the latter made his way swiftly and silently to the edge of the timber.

Although there was no moon the night was not one of inky blackness, and it was an easy matter for Injun to follow the trail made by the passing band. It was necessary to exercise considerable caution, however, for the same light that helped him find and follow the trail also rendered detection easier, especially as there were many open spaces to be crossed that offered little or no chance of concealment. And in the trailing or shadowing of a body of men so alert and vigilant as Indians, Injun had his work cut out for him, especially as, on many occasions, he must look out for Whitey as well as for himself. Not that Whitey was a negligible quantity by any means, as afterward turned out; but in the matter of keeping his presence secret from the Indians the difficulties were greatly increased; for even were Whitey possessed of the same

abilities as Injun, it is easier to detect *two* "shadows" than *one*.

As far as possible Injun took a course about fifty yards from, but parallel to, the trail that the band had taken to avoid any back-tracking that might occur; and to do this it was necessary, at times, to keep nearly abreast of the band and within hearing distance; although, as the chase proceeded, it became evident that the Indians were headed for that portion of the mountains where the fire had been displayed. As near as the boys were able to judge this point was some ten or twelve miles distant. This enabled Injun to take advantage of short-cuts which were impassable to horses, and the boys had, at first, no difficulty in "keeping up with the procession."

As the Indians and their "shadows" went farther and farther into the mountains, however, following a parallel course the boys encountered greater difficulties. Naturally the trail was "the path of least resistance"; that is the reason it was the trail, for a trail, after all, means simply the easiest natural way of traveling through any region. A trail is not a road, it is a selection of

passable places. It is not made; it is discovered or found; and, therefore, it is seldom straight, but winding and devious. Sometimes there is no "easiest way," and then there is no trail; and each traveler picks his way as best he can, if he goes at all. But this happens only in regions that are almost entirely unvisited; if there is a reason for people to go to a locality some kind of a trail is found, even if it be difficult and roundabout.

The region in which the boys now found themselves was of this character. There was little reason for any one to visit it; prospectors had given it the go-by, as Bill Jordan had said, and "the' wa'n't much thar 'ceptin' rocks, scenery, an' oncivilization." Whatever trail there was the band of Indians were following, and for that reason the boys were obliged to find a new way of their own. By this time the moon had risen, but if any one imagines that this was an easy job — over an entirely unknown region, difficult of passage even in the daytime, but rendered doubly so in the tricky moonlight which casts strange shadows and invests things with a certain unreality — let him try it some time! In

addition to these physical difficulties there was also the necessity of making their passage noiselessly; not only must yawning chasms and slippery declivities be avoided, but stones and earth must not be dislodged to rattle down the mountain-side and betray their presence to the band of Indians. Words of warning could be uttered only in whispers, for in those solitudes there is a silence so intense as to be almost unbelievable to one who has not experienced it. "It is so still you can hear it!" The slightest sound is audible at incredible distances, especially to an ear that is accustomed to this stillness as is an Indian's; and in the canyons and among the rocks are natural whispering-galleries, where sound is carried in an extraordinary manner. In many of the canyons the report of a shot-gun sounds like artillery, and it would be difficult to convince the uninitiated that many guns were not being fired in rapid succession. All these things did not conduce to avoiding discovery.

There is another thing, too, that worked against the boys. Whitey, and Injun, too, to a certain extent, were plainsmen — that is, their

experience in the wilds was largely confined to the plains — and the craft of the plains is a very different thing from the craft of the mountains. Many a man who is at home on the plains is at a great disadvantage in the mountains; and this is true of the mountaineer when he finds himself on the plains. The reason for this is somewhat obvious: the plainsman, "born in the saddle," is out of his element in the mountains because very often he is off his horse, and many a sure-footed mountaineer is not a really good horseman; although, all through the West, almost everybody whose life is spent in "The Great Outdoors," is able to ride, if only after a fashion. But to get back to the boys.

In the first half-hour of the pursuit, on two occasions Whitey had missed his footing and had fallen; one of these falls was of little consequence further than to send a few stones clattering down the mountain when Whitey scrambled to retain his footing. This was offset, or rather disguised, by Injun's quick thinking. The boy imitated the quick bark of a fox and if the Indians heard the rattle of the stones, which was likely,

they attributed it to the fact that a fox had startled some sort of animal, and was either pursuing it or fleeing from it himself.

The other fall was of a more serious character, and but for Whitey's great strength and agility might have resulted disastrously. In passing along a narrow and crumbling ledge, whether he was deceived by the tricky shadows, or whether the ledge simply crumbled beneath him, the boy slipped and slid over the edge. It was a sheer drop of something like fifty feet. Instinctively, Whitey made a grab for a small but tough shrub that grew out from the side of the cliff, some two feet below the brink, and caught this with his left hand. Even in the excitement of going over the edge he had not let go of his rifle, and held that in his right hand. Injun, of course, turned back quickly, as he had heard the sound of the slipping and the fall of the crumbling ledge; but Whitey was just out of reach, and the shrub, tough as it was, did not look as though it would hold the boy's weight for any great length of time. Whitey, however, was strong enough to pull himself up *by his left arm*

alone, in the same manner that a gymnast calls "chinning himself," until, by holding up the rifle in his right hand, Injun was able to grasp it and pull his companion up over the edge of the ledge. (Boys, try "chinning yourselves" with one hand on a horizontal bar, some time, and see how easy it is!)

There could be no doubt that the Indians had heard this commotion, for from the ledge Injun could see the band stop, and three or four of the men start back to investigate. Injun threw himself flat on the ledge alongside of Whitey, who had not yet risen; and as the Indians came nearer to the base of the cliff, he again imitated the bark of the fox. This appeared to satisfy the investigators, for they knew that a fox is inquisitive, and will sometimes trail a band of men or other animals for a long distance, and they turned and rejoined the band.

Whitey, of course, realized that if more of these alarming mishaps occurred, it might take more than all the fox-barking Injun could do to satisfy the Indians that they were not being followed by human beings, so he redoubled his caution, and

WHITEY MADE A GRAB FOR A SMALL BUT TOUGH SHRUB

endeavored to put his foot down, at every step, in the exact spot that Injun's foot had just left.

"Ain't I clever!" whispered the disgusted Whitey. "Just like a cow on skates! If I pull any more of that clumsy stuff I'll go back to the horses where I belong, and let you go ahead alone! I don't make any more noise than a boiler-works!"

Injun had probably never seen a cow on skates or heard a boiler-works, but he knew what Whitey meant, and he grinned. He also knew it was inadvisable to do much talking unless it were necessary, and he whispered, reprovingly, "Heap talk!" After that Whitey shut up like a clam.

When the Indians and their trailers had proceeded for a distance of perhaps five or six miles, and the ascent of the mountain became continually steeper, it was more and more difficult to parallel the trail. At times the boys were forced to descend to the same level as the Indians, and to follow in the same path that they had taken, and thus the danger of detection was greatly increased. But there was no other alter-

native, and it was either this or abandon the pursuit. The character of the trail, too, had made it necessary for all of the band to dismount and lead the horses; and at a place in the trail Injun stopped suddenly and peered at the ground. There, in the soft earth, showing plainly in the light of the moon, were several footprints, deeply embedded and distinctly outlined.

Whitey gazed at them, but they meant nothing to him, and he looked at Injun inquiringly.

"White man!" said Injun, laconically.

"How do you know?" asked Whitey. "Lots of Indians wear boots or shoes, don't they? I've seen lots of them."

"Injun toe in — white man toe out," said the boy. "Injun heel off ground."

Whitey examined two of the prints that had evidently been made by the same man, and there was no doubt that the person who took the step toed out, and that he had dug his heels deep into the ground.

"What's the idea?" asked Whitey. "Have they taken somebody prisoner and are carrying him off into the mountains?"

Injun shook his head, and pointed to an indentation that accompanied the footprints on the right-hand side of them. This indentation occurred at every two footprints. Whitey examined this indentation carefully, and thought for a moment.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, in a tone that made Injun involuntarily clap his hand over the white boy's mouth. "Gee!" whispered Whitey, "I'll spill the beans yet! But here is my dope on this thing — that little mark is caused by the butt of a gun which the white man carried in his right hand and used as a cane to steady himself. If he were a prisoner, he wouldn't be allowed to carry a gun! That's it, ain't it?"

Injun nodded; and Whitey felt that he was beginning to use his powers of observation. The man high up in almost any occupation or craft is little more than the keen observer who has the intelligence to apply what he observes. It is something that anybody can cultivate — it can be practiced at any hour of the day or night, if you are awake. Glance into a shop-window as you walk past, and then see how many things

you can remember that were in that window. Pretty soon you'll be surprised to find that one glance suffices to see about everything there was in it. Remember that it pays to observe *little* things; for they are often the forerunners and infallible signs of big things. To an Indian or to the woodsman a broken twig, recently roiled water, the way smoke rises or hangs in the air, the flight of birds, the growth of the foliage and moss on the trees, the action of animals—in fact, the slightest departure from what is usual or normal has a meaning, and often he determines his course of action from some slight thing which the ordinary man would not notice at all, but which has a very great bearing on the matter in hand. And don't lose sight of the main point in any reasoning. Don't be led astray from the issue. Somewhere I have read the story of the farmer who burst into the village general store, all excitement. "What d'ye s'pose?" he said, to the usual crowd of "sitters" around the stove, "Si Perkins seen a big owl settin' on the ridge-pole o' his barn, an' he went in an' got his shot-gun an' sneaked up on the owl an' let go at

him, ker-bang! An' the waddin' from th' gun set fire to th' hay in th' barn an' it done burned down. An' th' house ketched fire from it, an' they had all they c'd do t' save it!"

The sitters about the stove discussed this news for a long time — how much Si would lose, whether he was insured, whether any one was hurt, did he intend to rebuild, etc., etc. Finally, a hard-headed little man who had said nothing, but had listened attentively, said, "Well, what I'd like to know is — did Si hit the owl?"

And another thing — while we are talking about observation — *be sure that your observations are correct* before you begin to draw your conclusions from them. And don't take things for granted! And right here, another old story is worth repeating. Several supposedly learned men were debating why it is that a pail of water doesn't weigh any more after a live fish is put into it. They advanced all kinds of reasons, but none seemed conclusive. Finally, they went to Benjamin Franklin and put the question to him. "Let's see whether it doesn't weigh more," said Franklin; and he proceeded to weigh a pail

of water; and then put a live fish weighing two pounds into it and weighed it again. It weighed just two pounds more. That settled the argument. If Franklin had lived in our day, we would have said that he "was from Missouri!" He had to be shown. Because a lot of people say a thing is so doesn't make it so, and a great many popular suppositions have no basis of fact whatever, and are really only *superstitions*.

The boys followed the trail cautiously for a time, about a hundred yards behind the band, but finally arrived at a point where it would have been almost impossible for them to have continued without detection. A vast open space, more than a mile in extent and flooded by the moonlight, lay before them, and to cross this in the wake of the Indians would have been folly. And once they arrived on the other side of this space, it might be difficult to pick up the trail. So Injun determined to strike into the mountains in the direction in which they had seen the fire, feeling that there was no doubt that that was the objective point of the band, and that they could, perhaps, get ahead of them on

account of the fact that far greater speed could be made by the two boys than the band could attain, hampered as they were by their horses. And, in addition to this fact, they would not have to proceed with the same degree of caution that would be necessary if they followed their present or even a parallel course.

So, after a consultation, Injun and Whitey broke away from the trail, and started across the mountains — or, rather, on a diagonal course, which, according to Injun's calculations, would land them in the neighborhood of the fire which still glowed at intervals.

CHAPTER VII

CAUGHT

Now that the boys were out of sight and hearing of the band, not only was the way made easier, but conversation was permissible; not that the latter meant much in Injun's young life, for he could get along very well without much talk; but Whitey was burning to discuss the matter in hand.

"What do you make out of it all?" he asked, when they were well away from the trail.

"Dunno," answered Injun, shaking his head doubtfully. "No good!" he added — on that point he appeared to have no doubt. The discovery of the presence of a white man with the band had strengthened the impression that the boy had previously formed. He knew that any band of Indians traveling at that time of night and accompanied by a white man probably meant mischief. The white man wasn't helping the Indians — they were probably helping him. In nine cases out of ten, when a white man allies himself

with Indians, it is for his own benefit, not for theirs; and the Indians are frequently the sufferers for his misdeeds. In other words, the white man, afraid of burning his own fingers, used the Indian as a cat's-paw to rake the chestnuts out of the fire. If anybody got burned, it would be the cat; and the chestnuts invariably belonged to the white man!

"Don't you think it might be just a hunting party?" asked Whitey.

Injun shook his head decidedly. "Injun no hunt dat way."

"Well," continued Whitey, "they can't be cattle-rustlers, for they are going up into the mountains where there are no cattle. Maybe they are guiding the white man out of the mountains?"

Again Injun shook his head. "White man guide Injuns," he said.

"How do you know the white man is guiding them?" asked Whitey. "You couldn't see from that distance — could you?" Whitey was prepared to believe almost anything about Injun's eyesight, but this seemed a little too much. In

fact, Whitey's eyes were good enough for anybody, and he had all he could do to see the band at all.

"Injun step in white man tracks," said Injun. This was one of those matters of observation of little things that had escaped Whitey's examination of the tracks. With one or two exceptions — probably where the white man had deviated a little from the trail or had stopped to issue some directions — his tracks had been almost obliterated by those of the Indians that *followed* him.

"Gee!" exclaimed Whitey, in frank admiration, as he thought it over. "Injun, you're a wiz!"

For a long time they proceeded in silence, the difficulties of the course requiring much exertion. Once or twice they heard the squall of a panther far up the mountain, as he went his stealthy rounds in search of an early breakfast. And on those occasions there was the noise of a smaller animal as he fled in a panic before the marauder. At that particular point, however, the mountain was almost bare of timber, and the boys knew

that they had little to fear from the mountain lion in the open. If he attacks a man it is usually when he is desperate from hunger, and then his method of attack is to spring upon his victim unawares from the limb of a tree. He will seldom make a charge like a grizzly. If the panther doesn't land you in his first or second spring, he quits. The grizzly relies upon his tremendous strength and bulk to make an almost irresistible rush that sweeps everything out of his path and overwhelms the object of his attack, and he never quits! The panther must depend upon his quickness and cunning, both of which are by no means ordinary and make him a formidable enemy. A spring of twenty feet from a crouching position upon the limb of a tree is not at all an extraordinary effort for him. A panther is nothing more nor less than a big cat — and it is a matter of common knowledge how quick a cat is. If there is anything quicker than the members of the cat family, I don't know what it is — except lightning, and it wouldn't surprise me much to learn that a cat can dodge that!

The boys ploughed steadily ahead as fast as

the darkness and the rough going would permit, and, under Injun's infallible sense of direction, bearing toward the place where they had seen the fire. Frequently it seemed to Whitey that they were going in the wrong direction, but he had learned to trust all such matters to Injun implicitly, and he always found that his confidence was not misplaced.

Perhaps more than an hour had elapsed since they had left the trail, and soon the first streaks of the dawn would begin to paint the east, and Injun increased his speed, knowing that it would be far better to conduct their investigations under the cover of darkness. Already he had begun the ascent of the last steep slope that lay between the boys and the place where Injun judged the light had gleamed, but they were approaching it from a different angle than the one by which the Indians were coming. The course now lay through a thick belt of timber, which made progress more difficult not only because the foliage shut out the light, but because of the roots, fallen limbs, and underbrush that barred the way. Whitey was having a particularly hard time of it, and found it

all he could do to keep up with the swiftly moving Injun who seemed to avoid intuitively many of the things that Whitey blundered into. The briars scratched his face and hands and clung around his legs; low branches whipped him, and the protruding roots and fallen limbs tripped him; and now and then he stepped into a hole or ran plump into a tree with a bump that jarred him to his heels. (Try going through thick and pathless woods some dark night.)

"Gee!" panted Whitey, as he picked himself up after one of these mishaps. "You must have eyes like a cat! There's got to be something mighty interesting at the end to pay for all this. I'll bet these birds are just going to have a powwow or snake-dance or something that is none of our business."

"Heap talk!" grunted Injun. If Whitey was looking for any sympathy from Injun, that was all he got.

Injun had felt the ground become more level, and he knew that they had reached the brow of the hill, and were, therefore, near their goal. It was evident to Whitey that Injun was proceed-

ing with much more caution, picking his way — or, rather, Whitey's way — slowly and with the purpose of making as little noise as possible. In a moment, Whitey clutched Injun's arm: "I smell smoke," he whispered. Injun nodded — he had smelled it long before.

Gradually the boys worked their way along the comparatively level ridge to a point where there seemed to be a break; and beyond this break the faint illumination caused by a fire was sighted. Injun threw himself on the ground and crawled on his hands and knees toward the edge, and Whitey followed his example. Sheltered from view by the thick underbrush, the boys raised themselves and looked ahead across the slight depression. A fire illumined the whole scene, and by the light the boys could make out a hole or tunnel, some four or five feet in height, that ran into the hill. From this hole several Indians came at intervals, carrying sacks of earth which they dumped into a pile, and then returned for more.

For a moment or two the boys watched this in silence; and then Whitey whispered, "It's a

gold-mine, all right! I've read that is the way the Indians get out the pay-dirt."

Injun made no reply, but turned his head in a startled way, and Whitey also glanced quickly behind him.

The boys looked into the face of a gigantic Indian, who stood regarding them with stolid unfriendliness, his arms crossed upon his broad chest!

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLD-MINE

When John Babcock, an old and grizzled prospector, had stopped at the Bar O ranch, early in the preceding spring, he had been entertained by Mr. Granville, who made every passer-by a welcome guest, as you will recall in the case of the renegade Pedro. Mr. Granville had shown Babcock the piece of rich ore — the one that Bill Jordan had shown to Injun and Whitey — and had told him that it had been found years before in the mountains over beyond Moose Lake. This particular piece of ore had aroused the greed of more than one man to whom it had been shown, on account of its richness. But although many prospectors had made excursions into these mountains, no one had succeeded in locating pay-dirt of any value; and it had come to be a saying on the ranch that the gold contained in this particular piece was the only bit of that precious metal that the Almighty had ever put into that region. Babcock hefted and fondled the chunk lovingly,

and its fascination over him was almost pathetic, its lure irresistible.

"'Tain't so!" said the old man. "There's nuthin' truer than the sayin' thet 'wherever gold is thar's more.' An' besides, a man wouldn't need more'n a ton er two like this to be rich! Whar'd this chunk come from — what part o' them mount'ns, I mean?"

"That's jest it — nobody knows," answered Mr. Granville. "This here chunk was found onto a man thet had bin up in the mount'ns an' 'peared to be tryin' to get out. He was some hindered by three or four arrows that were stickin' in divers an' sundry parts of him. He'd bin dead for some days when one o' the boys found him on the trail. 'Peared like he'd mebbe located a pay-streak an' was comin' out t' get the means an' wherewithal to work it, when th' Injuns got him. Looked like th' Injuns didn't have no welcome on the mat for prospectors — leastways, thet's how we figgered it. The' was a lot o' men went in there, on account o' thet chunk, but none on 'em had any luck, an' I reckon pretty much all of 'em had trouble with the Injuns. But thet was ten years

ago, an' nowadays them Injuns is all drove out, I reckon. We give 'em consider'ble discouragement 'bout five or six years back, when they added cattle-rustlin' to their list of industries."

"Humph!" grunted Babcock; "I never hed no trouble with Injuns; them an' me seem t' jibe first-rate — mebbe on 'count o' me speakin' most ever' kind o' Injun lingo the' is. 'F I was t' git a grub-stake —"

"Come in th' house, an' we'll play a coupla games o' pedro an' talk it over," said Granville, and they disappeared into the ranch house.

At any rate, a day or two afterward Babcock left the ranch with a saddle-horse and a pack-horse loaded down with provisions, but nothing had been heard of him since. In the late spring Mr. Granville had died, the ranch had come into Mr. Sherwood's possession, and the incident had been almost forgotten.

It would, perhaps, be idle to follow the trail of Babcock, even if it were possible to do so accurately; suffice it, that he rode one day into a little Dakota Indian village on the north side of the mountains, and was so weak from the fever

that he had to be lifted from his horse. The Indians cared for him and nursed him for many days; but in spite of all their medicine man and the squaws and John Big Moose could do, Babcock died. But before he passed out he called in John Big Moose, and, in return for their kindness to him and on account of his general liking for their race, he communicated to him the information that he had located the rich mine, and gave him explicit directions as to how to find it; and the Indians of the village that were available, under the leadership of John Big Moose, lost little time in starting for the mine.

John Big Moose was a remarkable character; he was more than six feet tall and finely proportioned. He had been educated in a white man's school on account of his great intelligence and capabilities, but the lure of the wilds was in his blood, and at certain times he returned to his own people and lived their life and the life of his fathers that called to him irresistibly.

John Big Moose knew very well what a gold-mine was, and he knew the power it would bring to him and to his tribe, provided they could keep

it. He understood how uncertain it is for an Indian to keep anything that a white man wants, but he believed that he could arrange that. At least the mine could be worked in secret and a great quantity of gold could be extracted before they would be compelled to give it up— and they would never give it up without all the struggle that John, himself, was capable of making, and John was no ordinary Indian.

It will be remembered by those who have read the first volume of this series that on the night that Crowley, the foreman of the crooked Cross and Circle outfit, had saved Whitey's life at Ross's ranch, he had been released from the captured bunch by Bill Jordan, not only on account of what he had done for Whitey, but for old times' sake as well. Jordan had told him to select his revolver and rifle from the pile of captured weapons, and to "see how far he could ride away from those parts by sun-up." This Crowley proceeded to do; but instead of laying his course toward the railroad station, he had struck off toward the mountains, perhaps feeling that people, in general, and the sheriff, in particu-

lar, would not feel so leniently disposed toward him.

Whatever his reason was, he took this route; and in the course of time he stumbled upon the abandoned pans, cradle, and sluice-boxes that Babcock had used until the fever had compelled him to abandon them and seek such relief as he could among his friends, the Dakotas.

It isn't every man that has a perfectly good, ready-to-work gold-mine thrust upon him, and Crowley proceeded to make the most of his opportunity, which wasn't much. He had worked only long enough to know that the mine was a very rich one when something happened. Crowley was no weakling, and he wasn't a man to abandon a good thing easily; but ten or twelve Dakotas, most of them armed with rifles, caused Mr. Crowley to change his plans about working the mine any further — just then, anyhow — and he managed to get away from there with his life, almost all of his skin — except where several of the Dakotas' bullets had chipped pieces out of it — and about a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of loose gold which he had washed

out in less than two days. And the Dakotas took possession — for a time!

It must not be expected — not by any one acquainted with Mr. Crowley, at least — that that gentleman would sit by calmly and see a real good gold-mine taken away from him by "a handful o' —— —— red niggers," as he expressed it. Not by a good deal, it mustn't. Mr. Crowley was a more or less resourceful person himself, and he knew a thing or two about Indians. He knew that they will generally "fall for a white man's game," and also that in these latter days of the race it was an easy matter to set one tribe against another, especially if he could inject a quantity of "fire-water" into their systems and could dangle gold in front of their eyes.

He nosed around until he found another semi-nomadic tribe of the Crows, over on the western side of the mountains, and by means of the various "inducements" he held out it didn't take long to enlist a motley outfit of scalawags in the expedition that he had in mind. And so Crowley, at the head of some fifteen recruits, set out to jump the claim to which the Dakotas believed

they had fallen heir on the death of old John Babcock! All things considered, it bade fair to be the basis for some lively times in that vicinity. Mr. Sherwood and Bill Jordan would have felt comfortable, indeed, had they known that Injun and Whitey were destined to be in the thick of a mix-up of that kind! And in it they were — up to their eyes!

CHAPTER IX

JOHN BIG MOOSE

THE moment that Whitey's startled eyes saw the Indian, he whipped out his gun and covered the big man. The latter did not move, and a faint smile broke over his face. "What do you propose to do with that thing?" he asked, in perfect English.

"If you make a move," said Whitey, as fiercely as he could, after he had recovered from his astonishment at the Indian's speech, "I'll put a hole through you!"

"Oh, no, I don't believe you'll do anything of the kind," said the Indian calmly. "You don't look as bloodthirsty as all that! Besides, what do you want to kill me for?"

And when Whitey thought it over he didn't really know. It takes considerable nerve to shoot a man down, even if you know he is a deadly enemy — more nerve, anyway, than most fifteen-year-old boys have — and Whitey lowered the gun.

Injun had made no move at all during this time, and appeared to be awed by this majestic person of his own race who could talk like a white man. In fact, the whole affair was very disconcerting to the two boys. The Indian didn't seem surprised or at all alarmed at their presence, but seemed inclined to treat them as a pair of runaway schoolboys that he intended to return to their parents. He was not at all threatening, but looked at them much as a correction officer looks at a truant or juvenile culprit.

"What are you two doing out here in this wilderness, anyway?" he asked, a little sternly. "Is there anybody with you — I don't suppose you have come away out here alone?"

"We're here alone," said Whitey, a trifle haughtily. "Injun and I go anywhere!" Then he added, after a moment, "We can take care of ourselves, all right!"

"You are of my people," said the big man to Injun in the language of the Dakotas. "What is your tribe? Where do you live?"

In the Sioux tongue, Injun replied: "I am of the Mini-ko-wo-ju."

(The Mini-ko-wo-ju are a tribe of the Sioux or Dakotas who derived their tribal name from the fact that they always lived on the banks of a river where they planted Indian corn. "Mini-ko-wo-ju" means "plant by river.")

"And who are you?" he asked of Whitey.

"My name is Sherwood! — I am the son of Mr. Sherwood who owns the Bar O ranch, about twenty miles north of the Junction," answered Whitey.

"Well," said the Indian, "you're both a long way from home! What did you come over here for?"

"We came here just for a trip into the mountains — to explore the place," replied Whitey, who was beginning to regain his composure. "Earlier in the summer we came over to Moose Lake, and we wanted to come into the mountains — just to see what there is here."

"Hummm," mused the Indian, sizing up the boys; "that doesn't sound very probable, but maybe it's true. Have you any idea of what you were looking at when I came along and caught you? Do you know what those men are

doing down there by the fire — what they are carrying out of that hole?"

"It looks to me as though they were working a gold-mine," said Whitey. "I've read that the Indians work a mine that way — carry the pay-dirt out in sacks."

"Hummm," said the big Indian, again. "You didn't come here with the idea of selecting a gold-mine for yourselves, did you? Hadn't heard anything about there being one here, had you?"

"We knew there was gold in these mountains — somewhere," said Whitey, frankly, "for there is a big chunk of ore over at the ranch that came from somewhere around here; and Bill Jordan told us that if a gold-mine walked up and said 'How do you do' to us, to bring it back with us. That's about all the gold-mine idea we had."

John Big Moose shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid that's enough!" he said, a little wearily. "It would seem as though a poor and deserving Indian might be permitted to shovel a little dirt out of a hill that is a hundred miles from anywhere, without having visitors! Still" — he

said, more to himself than to the boys, as he thought over his own position in the matter of the ownership of the mine — "I don't know that I have a right to expect anything different — under the circumstances. Come down with me by the fire, and we'll talk the matter over."

And John Big Moose *led* the way down the declivity, being apparently satisfied that the boys would follow him and not try to get away. Whitey looked at Injun, and Injun looked at Whitey; then, with one accord, they followed meekly in the wake of John Big Moose.

When John and the boys arrived within the circle of the fire's light, there was considerable interest apparent among the Indians who were working at the mine, and it must be confessed that this interest did not seem to be an altogether friendly one. The red men gathered about the little group, and John explained to them what had happened. Injun, of course, could understand everything that was said, and did not seem entirely pleased with it; and even to Whitey, who could not understand a word, it was evident that the Indians resented the intrusion and were

not inclined to regard the matter lightly. John Big Moose, however, was plainly acting in the rôle of moderator, and seemed to be discouraging anything like hasty or summary action. He explained to his men that the intruders were nothing but boys, and as far as any immediate danger to their interests was concerned they had nothing to fear. The only danger lay in the fact that, once the boys were free, they might, or undoubtedly would, tell of the mine, and thus bring a host of white men to the spot to the obvious disadvantage of the Indians. He explained that it would be well to question the boys further before taking any definite measures. He was perfectly satisfied, from Whitey's manner and evident frankness, that the boys would tell the truth, and might give him some information upon which he could form his plans.

"How did you two boys happen to come here — to this very spot, I mean?" he asked of Whitey. "It doesn't seem probable to me that you could have just stumbled upon it."

Whitey thought for a moment, and then decided that the best way in this rather ticklish

situation was to tell the whole truth. Not that he really considered lying at all; but there were certain things that he might conceal or keep back that had no bearing upon the truth.

"Injun and I were in camp in a little clump of woods, way down at the base of the mountains and over in that direction, I think it was," said Whitey, indicating the direction from which they had come. "A little after midnight we were waked up by a band of Indians and horses passing the camp, about fifty yards below us—"

John Big Moose became interested at once. "A band of Indians — how many, and in what direction were they going?" he asked.

"There were about fifteen, we figured," said Whitey, "and they were skirting the base of the mountain. They had a lot of horses with them which they rode and led. We watched them pass from the clump of trees, and then we came out into the open. Way up here we saw the fire, and we thought it was a signal of some kind and—"

John Big Moose gave a hurried order, and the men quickly covered the fire. "Yes, yes!" said John to Whitey. "Go on!"

"Injun said that they were out for some kind of mischief, and we made up our minds to follow them and see what they were up to. We paralleled their trail for quite a way, but sometimes we had to come back to it; and at one place, where the ground was soft, Injun saw by the footprints that there was a white man with them — he was leading them."

The effect of this speech upon John Big Moose was very marked. He turned to the men and evidently communicated to them what Whitey had told him, and the men proceeded to get busy. There could be no doubt that the dispossessed Crowley was returning with reënforcements. In a moment the entire band was gathered about John Big Moose, their guns or other weapons in their hands; and acting under his orders, they posted themselves at various points around the mine so as to command every possible approach to it. Two of them, detailed by John Big Moose, hurriedly left the place and started away through the woods, evidently to do duty as scouts or pickets; and in other ways the place was prepared with a view to resisting an attack.

This done, John Big Moose questioned Whitey and Injun in regard to the time they had seen the band, their course, and what they knew of the equipment that the band carried. Injun was of the opinion that he and Whitey had far outstripped the band, and that they were not due in the vicinity until after daylight, encumbered as they were by the horses and deprived of an opportunity to take a short-cut as he and Whitey had done. Evidently John Big Moose was of the same opinion, but he resolved to take no chances; and leaving the boys for a moment, he circled the mine giving whispered instructions to his "army," and estimating the probabilities of attack from various angles.

"Well, here we are!" said Whitey to Injun, after John Big Moose had started on his tour of the "fort," for such the place had resolved itself into. "What'll we do? I don't believe these people will want to make us stay here. I guess we can beat it, right now — if we want to."

Injun shrugged his shoulders, indicating that it was a matter of indifference to him what they did. Whitey looked about him for a moment,

and then started to walk leisurely toward the inner edge of the camp. He had taken but a step or two when he was confronted by an Indian with a gun, who seemed to rise up from nowhere; and if Whitey had any idea that the boys would be allowed to "beat it," that idea was quickly dispelled by the Indian's manner. The Indian jabbered at him savagely and made violently threatening motions whose meaning could not be mistaken.

"Oh, very well!" said Whitey, moving back to his place beside Injun. "He told me to go way back and sit down, and I thought I'd oblige the gentleman — he seemed a little mad!"

In a few moments John Big Moose returned to the boys. "I have been a little puzzled as to what I ought to do with you two boys," he said. "Before long things will be pretty hot around here; but I don't see how I can afford to let you go — for two reasons. First, because if you happened to run into this gang that has come here to jump this claim you would be in more danger than if I put you in that tunnel until the fight is over. And secondly, if you managed to get

away from the robbers that are coming here, you'd tell all you know, and that would be bad for me again. That's what you'd do, isn't it — tell your folks all about it?"

"Yes," said Whitey, "I guess we would. But I can tell you, right now, that my folks aren't the kind that would come here and take anything that doesn't belong to them!" Whitey added, a little hotly.

John Big Moose smiled. "Your defense of your folks does you credit, son, and no doubt you speak what you believe to be true — *is* true, from your point of view. But my long and somewhat bitter experience tells me that the white man's ideas of what belongs to him don't always square up with an Indian's ideas. However, I'm going to take a chance," continued the Indian. "I'm going to leave it to you as to what you want to do — go or stay. As far as your personal safety is concerned, I believe one is about as dangerous as the other; for, from what you say, that gang must be pretty near here by this time, and they will keep a sharp lookout, and there is no telling how they may regard you. They may

kill you. You'll find friendly treatment here — from us, anyway. Of course, if you decide to stay, we won't expect you to do any fighting. If we lose — aren't able to hold the place" — John Big Moose paused and smiled grimly — "in that case, of course, I can't guarantee anything. So it's up to you." And John looked from one to the other for a decision.

Whitey weighed the two courses in his mind for a time and then he turned to Injun: "What do you say, Injun?" he asked.

Injun again shrugged his shoulders and made no other reply, plainly leaving the decision to his companion.

"Well," said Whitey, slowly, "if I've got to decide it, I vote to stay. We came out here looking for adventure, and I guess we can get plenty of that no matter which we do — go or stay. If you own this mine and somebody is coming to try to rob you of it, I don't know why we shouldn't stay and help defend it — as a matter of duty. I know if we were in your position, and you came along, we'd be mighty glad to have you stay and help us defend what belonged to us."

John Big Moose reached out his enormous paw and shook Whitey's hand with solemn dignity. "I thank you, son, for those sentiments," he said approvingly. "I think it is a very fortunate thing for us that you and your friend came along. But, as I said before, neither of you is to do any fighting. I am going to put you both in that tunnel, where you'll be fairly safe. When it's all over, you can come out. You'll find me still here — alive, I hope," he added, grimly.

"We don't want to go and hide in any tunnel!" said Whitey, with some indignation. "I don't know that we are very great fighters, but we can both shoot pretty straight, and we might manage to do something!"

"I feel that I must reject your generous offer, although I appreciate it," said John, smiling at the boys. "But this is a matter in which you have no real interest — except to see that right is maintained, and I can't allow you to take any such risk."

Even as John spoke, a shot rang out, far down toward the valley; and in rapid succession, two more were heard.

"The tunnel is right over there," said John Big Moose, meaningly, pointing a big forefinger at the opening in the side of the hill. Injun and Whitey took up their guns, which John had not deemed necessary to take away from them, and made their way over to the tunnel and seated themselves resignedly a short distance from its mouth.

Up in the sky the stars had begun to grow dim and then to go out altogether. The moon had long since disappeared, and over the eastern horizon the blackness had become gray, and was now changing to purple, with here and there faint tints of pink, and the day was at hand.

Whitey and Injun sat upon opposite sides of the tunnel, their backs against the walls, each busy with his own thoughts, but with every sense keenly alert. Far off in the woods Whitey could hear the faint twitter of the awakening birds and the occasional sharp bark of a fox. Not a sound came from the armed camp about him, but he knew that the red men lay in wait, silent and deadly as a water-moccasin that gives no warning when he strikes.

It would be idle to say that Whitey—or Injun, either, for that matter — sat there unconcerned and indifferent. Whitey was very much alive to the seriousness of the situation, but his nerves were under control and there was nothing panicky about him. It would be untrue to say that he had no fears — was not afraid. The bravest men in the world know what fear is, but they don't allow it to influence their actions. It is impossible to think that any boy of fifteen, knowing that he will soon be under fire, *for the first time in his life*, experiences no fear! He does. He *must!* And bravery consists in putting fear behind you — in disregarding it. If there were no fear, how could there be any bravery?

There is an old story of a young lieutenant who rode into battle at the side of his commander, the hero of many campaigns and a man renowned for his bravery. The lieutenant was blithe and gay, and the old general was plainly apprehensive. The lieutenant turned to his commander and said, "Why, General! You actually seem to be afraid!"

"I am," said the general. "And if you were

half as much afraid as I am, you would run away."

Whitey had learned enough philosophy to know that when you are in a bad situation, the only thing to do is to make the best of it. The thing to do is, don't get into the bad situation unless you are prepared to go through with it. And with his mind made up to take what came, Whitey awaited what the day had in store for him. If Injun had been asked about it, he would have said, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he'd "take a little of the same!" Whatever was coming to Whitey was good enough for Injun!

CHAPTER X

A DANGEROUS MISSION

When Big Jim Crowley had been driven from the mine by John Big Moose and his braves, he had considered himself a much aggrieved man. To all appearances the mine was an abandoned one, and Crowley considered that he was its rightful owner—by right of possession, anyway; which under all codes is considered to be "nine points of the law." Babcock had not been at the mine for weeks, and therefore there were no signs of recent work visible to Crowley, nor any of the usual marks that indicated claim and boundary.

Upon the coming of John Big Moose and his Indians there had been no parley or discussion; and, therefore, neither party understood the position of the other. Usually that is the basis of all quarrels of any kind — a misunderstanding. Crowley had simply warned off the Indians, regarding them as claim-jumpers, and had opened fire on them; and they, looking upon him in the same light, had replied, with the result as told

before — Crowley had no chance against ten or twelve armed men under the leadership of such a man as John Big Moose. And Crowley was compelled to take it on the run, minus a little skin and blood from slight wounds.

John and his braves considered the mine to be rightfully theirs, by virtue of Babcock's grant to them; and so, with each party deeming itself to be in the right, the struggle was likely to be bitter and tenacious.

With the first real light of the day the two Indians who had been out on scout or picket duty returned to the mine, and reported that a party of Crows led by a white man were in the valley to the southeast, and that one of them had fired a shot at the intruders, who had fired two shots in reply, but that none of the shots took effect. Again, the same situation had come about — an exchange of shots before any exchange of views had taken place, and now such a thing as a conference or peaceful adjustment was out of the question. And with the enemy known to be at hand, John Big Moose ordered his men to redouble their vigilance.

As the morning wore on and no attack came, Whitey began to feel that the attack would not be made until it could be done under the cover of night, and there yet remained time for other things—one of which was breakfast. For the first time since starting in pursuit of the band, Whitey realized that he was hungry; and he and Injun got out the chunks of bacon and bread with which they had supplied themselves before starting out and fell to with a relish. Raw bacon and dry bread are not usually considered to be a very great delicacy; but on this occasion and under the circumstances, Whitey made no complaint. He had consumed perhaps half of what he had allotted to himself as a meal, when, without any warning, a number of shots were fired from the slope that led down on the eastern side of the mountain, and several of the bullets pinged through the leaves of the nearby trees or embedded themselves in the trunks. Breakfast was over!

There was no reply of shots from the holders of the "fort," for John Big Moose had studied the situation carefully. The tunnel was sunk

into the side of the hill, perhaps two thirds of the way up the mountain, and before the tunnel was a small level plateau to which the pay-dirt was brought out. This plateau, not more than fifty or sixty feet in extent, sloped sharply on the left to the valley below on the southeasterly side; while on the westerly and northwesterly sides there was a very gradual descent. To the north and northeast the mountain rose high behind it, and it was from this point that John Big Moose expected the attack, believing that the shots were fired from the side toward the valley to attract the attention of his men to that locality, so that the rest of the band might have the advantage of an attack from the higher ground and upon their unprepared rear. There was a growth of timber on all of these slopes; but thinner, of course, nearer the top of the mountain than upon the slopes that led to the valley from the plateau of the mine.

Events proved that John had figured correctly, and in a short time the fire of the attack came from above; but even this fire was not answered, for there was little chance of doing any effective

shooting on account of the thickness of the timber; and it became evident to both parties that nothing of any consequence could be accomplished except at close quarters. In case the attacking party rushed the defenders and tried to storm the place, the engagement would probably be a long-drawn-out affair. Expecting this kind of an attack, John Big Moose had posted most of his men on the uphill side of the mine, leaving only two or three to guard the slope to the valley. In case of an attack from that quarter, the men could be rushed over the fifty feet of plateau in ample time to meet it, and as the number of each party was about the same, the advantage would be, of course, with the defenders unless they were taken by surprise, a thing which John did not propose should happen.

After a time the fire from above ceased, as it must have been evident to the attackers that it was accomplishing nothing, and for more than an hour nothing happened — one of those long waits that are far more trying to the nerves than actual fighting. Now and then, as John made the rounds of his men, he would stop at the

mouth of the tunnel and say a few words to the boys.

"How does it feel to be under fire?" he asked.

"Gee!" said Whitey, "I can't see that we're under fire, cooped up in this tunnel! I feel like a rabbit in a burrow waiting for a dog to dig him out."

"The dog doesn't always dig him out," returned John, grimly, as he started to walk away.

"Is this mine so very valuable that all this fuss should be made over it — people come a long way to fight for it and kill each other?" asked Whitey.

"Yes," answered John, "it is probably very valuable, but that isn't the real point. The mine belongs to us, and these people have come here to take it away from us by force. If it wasn't worth a last year's bird's nest, I would fight for it under those conditions!"

"How did you come to get it — did you discover it?" asked the boy.

"We got it from a man named Babcock who was the discoverer. He came to our village, sick and about to die, and we nursed and cared for

him. In return, just before he died, he called me in and gave it to the people who had been kind to him. I think that makes our title good."

"I don't understand what claim these other people have on it," said Whitey. "What has the white man who is with them got to do with it? How did they come to know about the mine?"

"When we came here to take possession of our mine," said John, patiently, "we were fired on by a white man who had evidently been working it in Babcock's absence. He didn't wait to ask who we were, but opened fire at once and hurt one or two of our men. We returned the fire, of course, and drove him out — as we had a right to do. Now, it is evident that he has gone off and incited a tribe of the Crows, by promises of wealth, to back him up in his attempt to retake the mine. That is all clear, isn't it? And you don't suppose we're going to submit to any such robbery, do you?"

"I don't know," said Whitey, in a puzzled way. "Maybe he thinks that *you* people are robbers, too, because you took it away from him by force.

He doesn't know that this Babcock gave the mine to you, does he?"

"No; he opened fire on us before we had a chance to tell him who we were or establish our claim," said John, "and violence must be met with violence. Now, it is too late for any talk. He preferred to argue with a rifle, and I guess we'll let him have his own way," added John, his face setting hard as he made his way across the plateau toward his men.

Whitey thought soberly for a long time. When he had started for the West, he had been of the opinion that killing Indians came pretty near being the "king of outdoor sports." In many of the books he had read, the life of an Indian didn't have any value at all. In fact, killing an Indian was commendable. An Indian's only part of the show was to get himself killed — if it wasn't for killing him, the book could get along first-rate without him. "Crack! went the rifle, and another of the red devils bit the dust!" That was a favorite line. He had never stopped to figure how the Indian felt about it! But after he had been in the West for a time, his ideas began to change. *Read-*

ing about it was a very different thing from *doing* it, or even seeing it done. Injun was an Indian — and his pal — not a great deal different from many of the boys in school back East — maybe a lot better than some. Nor could Whitey imagine that it would be any very great pastime to kill an Indian like John Big Moose, or even some of his men. They looked quite a good deal like human beings. So did some of the Indians that had come to the ranch — one or two had given him beaded moccasins, and another had built him a canoe. Come to think of it, it was the old Indian squaw who had saved his life with her herbs and stuff that she cooked in the kettle on the tripod, that time he got bitten by the rattler! Take it all in all, he didn't think it would be an especially attractive sight to see the ground covered with writhing, wounded men — even Indians — in bloody agony and death.

Whitey got up from where he sat in the tunnel and walked straight across the plateau to John Big Moose — Injun followed him. He was his pal, and he was going "to have a little of the same," whatever it was!

"Mr. Big Moose," said Whitey, in a determined way, "I don't believe it's too late to have some kind of a settlement of all this!"

Mr. Big Moose started in astonishment, and yanked the two boys behind a tree.

"What are you doing out here contrary to orders?" asked the big man. "How would you propose to settle it?"

"I don't know just how," said the boy, earnestly, "but I'm willing to go and see that other gang and find out if it can't be done. I don't think they'll shoot me — I'm a boy, and they'll know that I am not coming to attack them. If there is a white man there, I can talk to him, anyway! Please let me try!"

"Your intentions are very good, son," said John, "but I can't see what there is to settle. This mine belongs to us, and we won't give in an inch! That doesn't leave much to settle, does it?" And John looked down at Whitey, admiring, but very firm.

"Maybe you won't have to give in — when they understand how the thing stands," pleaded the boy. "At any rate, I'll explain the case to

the white man. If he's half white, he'll see that you have justice on your side and do what's right. It's worth trying, anyhow!"

John Big Moose shook his head. "No, son, that is far too dangerous a mission for you to undertake. Besides, I'm afraid you are thinking about what your father would do in a similar case," he continued. "This white man will probably act very differently — he has acted differently, already."

"I know that," said Whitey, "but he didn't understand then, and he doesn't understand now! Please let me go!"

It took quite a little urging, but almost against his better judgment—finally, he reluctantly consented; and Whitey made ready to go, laying aside his rifle and revolver, showing that he was unarmed.

"What are you going to tell him?" asked John. "What are you going to ask him to do?"

"I don't know," answered Whitey. "I'll wait till I get there and then I'll figure that out." And he started away toward the rise of the mountain above them. Injun followed after him.

"Here!" said John, sharply, in the Dakota language, "I don't think you better go along, boy. They may not have the same consideration for you that they will for the white boy. You come back!"

Injun turned to John Big Moose with all the dignity that can be invested in five-foot-three, and said something that sounded to Whitey like a pack of fire-crackers going off. And John Big Moose slowly nodded his head, and made no further objection to Injun's going.

"What did you say to him?" Whitey asked, as they departed.

"Me tell 'um we come together — we go together," growled Injun.

"Good old Injun!" said Whitey, slapping his pal on the back; and the two boys made their way among the trees, each with one hand held high in the air.

CHAPTER XI

CROWLEY

In the camp of the enemy it cannot truthfully be said that entire harmony prevailed, which fact accounted, in part, for the delayed attack upon the defenders of the mine. It will be remembered that Crowley was not the most gentle of mortals, even when sober; and in instilling a little "Dutch courage" into his band of followers he had also instilled a little—or perhaps more than a little — into himself. Neither he nor his men were really very drunk, but they had had enough to make them bad-tempered; and the Indians, smarting under a blow from Crowley's heavy fist, or from one of his No. 11's, were nursing something that bordered on mutiny. Crowley had been accustomed of late to dealing with Greasers and half-breeds and the Indians of the South — a very different proposition from the Indians of the North. Sometimes an accredited officer of the law or of the military can get away with a good deal of high-handed stuff,

or an ordinary white bully if he is in a white man's community. But it is bad judgment to kick an Indian around when you're a hundred miles in the wilderness and there are ten or fifteen of his own kind with him — especially if they are doing you more or less of a favor and the jug has been passing around a little freely. It doesn't do to show any weakness, of course; but, by the same token, it doesn't do to hand out brutality. And about this time Mr. Crowley found himself in somewhat of a fix.

It had occurred to several of his "army" that maybe this white man wasn't altogether necessary to the success of this expedition anyhow, and perhaps they could get along very well without him. He would probably want about all the gold there was in the mine for his share — they were not altogether without previous bitter experience as to what "a white man's share" is — even after they had done the work of digging it out. Besides, one man less would make each one's share just that much larger. He had not endeared himself to them exactly, and was not the kind that they were wildly enthusiastic to fight,

bleed, and die for—not after the whiskey began to get a little low, he wasn't. He didn't look near so much like a fairy godfather as he did at first. In fact, his unpopularity had reached that stage where Mr. Crowley could see it himself. He was, however, somewhat handicapped when it came to making reparation for what he recognized as mistakes. Not knowing how to talk Crow Indian very well, he couldn't offer a very elaborate apology and smooth things over, and he didn't dare to ask them "to have another drink and forget it." The most casual observer could have seen that he was "in bad."

As will be remembered from those things that Crowley did at the Cross and Circle ranch, and from the episode with Bill Jordan in Silver-Dollar Joe's place in San Antone, he was neither a coward nor a bully. But there is no telling what a man will do when he has a "cargo of red-eye on board." And Crowley sober, and Crowley half drunk, were two different individuals. The realization of his position, however, had sobered him considerably; and he had come to the conclusion that the only thing for him to do was to

bluff it through and trust to his rather masterful personality to prevent any actual rebellion; thus far there had been only black looks and the sullen performance of such things as were immediately necessary.

Whitey and Injun had made their way for perhaps some two hundred yards up the hill and nothing had happened and nothing unusual could be seen by them. In fact, there was a stillness that was almost oppressive; no twitter of birds or any sight of the usual small animals. Injun knew that this was because of the fact that there were men in the forest and the birds and animals were keeping under cover. The boys knew, too, that there were keen eyes upon them, and that at any moment an Indian might shoot at them.

As they proceeded up the rather rough and steep slope, each of the boys kept his hand held aloft in token of salutation, and as a sign, moreover, that he intended no harm. When they were well away from the mine, perhaps a quarter of a mile, Injun suddenly stopped, and called in a loud voice, "How Kola-how-how!"

Whitey stopped also, and he knew that Injun

must have seen something. For a moment there was no answer, and then three Indians, each carrying a rifle, rose up from the thick underbrush and came toward them. While the attitude of the Indians was not exactly menacing, it was by no means friendly, and left no doubt that the boys were prisoners, although they were not bound or forcibly restrained. Injun did the talking and Whitey realized that had he been alone he might have had some difficulty in making the Indians, who were practically sure to intercept him before he got to the white man, understand what the object of his mission was.

One of the Indians questioned the boys in the Crow tongue, which, of course, Injun did not understand. So the language that is universally understood between all Indian tribes, and which is also understood by many of the white pioneers, was resorted to — hand-talk, or the language of signs. For example, the Sioux or Dakotas, Crows, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, or whatever the tribe may be, all speak a different tongue just like the different nations of the white race — English, Russian, French, Italian, Spanish, or Swedish. But,

as I have stated, the plains Indians understand the universal language — hand-talk.

As Injun explained to their captors that they brought a message from the Dakotas to the "White Chief," Whitey gazed with wide-eyed admiration at his quiet young friend, who carried on the free and understandable conversation with graceful signs. This was the first time that Whitey had ever seen hand-talk, and in spite of the seriousness of the situation and the menacing attitude of the Crows he could not but marvel at the beauty and majesty of the conversation — hand-talk being made with full arm gestures and with swinging motions or postures of the body. It is beautiful in its freedom and grace.

The three Crows consulted for a time in their own tongue, and Injun was unable to understand a word of what was said. Finally one of them gestured to Injun:

"Do the Dakotas wish to surrender?"

With dignity, Injun resumed his hand-talk:

"The message is for the White Chief. Take us to him."

It was plain, to the boys, that the Indians were

not any too willing to do this; but after a short consultation they signed to Injun and Whitey to precede them farther up the mountain, and the three Indians fell in behind. At intervals, as they proceeded, they were joined by other Indians who seemed to Whitey to come out of the air, so complete had been their concealment. And Whitey now realized that had they left the mine when they had first made the attempt which was frustrated by one of the guards, it would have been next to impossible to have eluded the band that almost completely surrounded the place. They proceeded in silence, as far as any talk between the boys and their captors was concerned, but the Indians were exchanging significant looks. In a few moments, however, they arrived at a small and nearly level nook in which the Indians had left their horses and such equipment as they had brought. And there, too, was the "White Chief" — but he was tied to a tree!

Whitey had not recovered from his astonishment at the condition of the man who he supposed was the leader and commander of the gang, when he received a further shock of an equally

violent nature. As he approached the man the latter let out a laugh that sounded strange, considering the serious plight he was in.

"Jumpin' Jehosophat!" he roared, "ef it ain't them two r'arin' catamounts from the Bar O! Does yo' two calc'late to mix in with ev'ry rough-house party thet's giv' in this here region? How's my friend Bill Jordan comin' on — not t' mention Pedro an' Ol' Man Ross, right name Yancey?"

"Mr. Crowley!" said Whitey in astonishment. "What's the matter? Were you the white man who started to work the mine when the Dakotas came and took it away from you?"

"I am that same," said Crowley. "An' I was preparin' t' lead these here red skunks t' everlastin' riches, repose, an' rum, when they turns on me an' has me wrapped up here like a bat handle."

"Well, what was the matter?" asked Whitey.

"Wal," said Crowley, "'pears like I didn't hev parlor-manners 'nuff t' suit 'em. I give one 'r two of 'em a slap on th' wrist an' a kick in th' pants, an' they took it to heart. Seems they was

brung up pets an' wasn't used t' bein' spoke harsh to; 't any rate, they gits peeved an' here I be. Was yo' all jes' droppin' in t' make a mornin' call — er what? Yo'll hev t' 'scuse my not shakin' hands with yuh, but I'm some discommoded an' hindered!"

"We came over from the mine to see if there isn't some way that can be found to stop the fighting," said Whitey, earnestly. "John Big Moose says that they won't give in an inch, because they own the mine — a man named Babcock discovered it and gave it to them when he died. But I said that maybe you and your Indians didn't know that, and that you were willing to be reasonable. Of course, I didn't know that you were the white man, Mr. Crowley."

The Indians had gathered around and it was evident that some of them understood what was being said; but they waited for the talk to proceed between Whitey and Crowley.

"Well," smiled Crowley, "I don't know as I've got nuthin' to say 'bout whut's to be did er not did — jes' now, I ain't. I don't seem to occupy no very high position in a-thor'ty, not in this

camp, I don't! But mebbe 'f I was t' be ontied an' 'lowed t' discuss th' matter, we might come t' some understandin'. Kin thet pal o' your'n speak th' lingo o' these here onregenerate heathens? 'F he kin, tell 'im t' put th' matter up to 'em."

Thus appealed to, Injun resorted to his hand-talk and thus explained the situation. He met with no enthusiasm in regard to a conference with the Dakotas at the mine; and, as far as letting Crowley loose, there was "nothing doing."

It was scarcely necessary to interpret what the Indians had said in reply to his proposition, for their sinister faces and the stolid opposition in their gestures and manner could be easily understood. Both Whitey and Crowley watched their faces anxiously, and could gain no encouragement therefrom. But Whitey was not the kind that gives up easily; he had been in difficult places before and had won out, and he might do so again.

"Why don't you act reasonable?" he said, facing the braves. "What do you want to kill each other for? If you go over there and talk to John Big Moose, I know he'll do what's fair."

Injun explained Whitey's words. The name of John Big Moose seemed to create an impression among the Indians, and there was some nodding and whispering that meant the name had a meaning to them.

"Look here, kid," said Crowley, while this was going on, "I reckon I'm in about as Dutch as a skunk at a camp-meetin', an' I don't want t' see yo' come t' harm on my account. Now, 'f I was yo' —"

One of the braves came menacingly to Injun, and demanded, in the hand-talk, "How many of the Dakotas are guarding the mine?"

Injun ignored the brave and, turning to Whitey, he repeated the Indian's question.

Without any hesitation Whitey said, "Tell him something less than fifty!" Injun gestured Whitey's words — at least, he gestured what he *thought* were Whitey's words! And the answer seemed to create a considerable change of sentiment among the braves. They themselves numbered about fifteen, and if there were fifty men guarding the mine, it would be folly to try to rush them in their intrenched position, or even

to win the mine from them in any other way. This put a new face on the matter in two ways, and both Whitey and Crowley soon became alive to it: it might end hostilities, as far as an actual conflict between the two bands of Indians were concerned, but it did not better the situation for Crowley or even for themselves. If the Crows, feeling themselves hopelessly outnumbered, concluded that further efforts were useless and that they must withdraw, naturally their resentment against Crowley would be increased, and this might extend to the boys also.

"I tol' 'em the' wa'rn't more'n ten er twelve," said Crowley, with a grin in which there was no mirth. "I reck'n they won't feel none too cordial towards me fer gittin' into a mess like thet. But it can't be helped, son. Yo' done whut yo' figgered was best."

"As far as we're concerned," said Whitey, with a puzzled face, "I guess I made a mistake. I guess the truth is better than a lie, any time, no matter what the advantages seem to be for telling one. Can you make out what they are talking about, Injun?"

The braves had withdrawn some distance from the tree to which Crowley was tied, and seemed to be discussing the matter with considerable bitterness, and the argument was more or less heated. Although Injun could not understand the Crow tongue, he was an Indian. He knew Indian nature, and he knew that the Crows meant mischief. So he expressed himself.

"It don't look any too good for us in any event," said Whitey. "What do you think we better do?" he asked.

"Me cut white man loose," whispered Injun, as he edged toward the tree and then slipped behind it. Reaching into his shirt, the boy took out his hunting-knife, and a few slashes served to release Crowley from his bonds. That he was not observed was not strange, as the braves were engaged in a heated debate and there were two or three trees that partially intervened between them and the group at the tree. Crowley cautiously shook his limbs loose from the rope — fortunately he had been bound but a short time and his legs and arms were not yet numb.

"Good eye!" he whispered to Injun. "Now

yo' two beat it as fast as yo' kin down to the right. The' ain't a chance in th' world o' you squarin' things. I got a gun in my shirt thet they overlooked when they was a-hog-tiein' of me, an' I'll slip after yo'. 'F they gits wise yo' keep on goin' lickety-split hell-bent fer 'lection, an' I'll lam off in th' other direction an' try to stan' 'em off till yo' all gits cl'ar. They want me more 'n they want yo' all, an' yo' kin giv' 'em quite a race in them woods. Beat it, now. Don't waste no time botherin' 'bout me!"

Injun and Whitey slipped away as noiselessly as possible, and had gone more than two or three hundred yards down the slope and out of sight among the trees where they could run at top speed without regard to noise, before they heard a rumpus back of them on the hill, and several shots fired. Injun led the way, and Whitey endeavored to step exactly in his footprints, as far as possible. Injun's quick eye and his experience in going through the woods, avoiding treacherous places and obstructions, stood them in good stead; and in a few moments the boys felt that they had left pursuit far behind, if, indeed, there

had ever been any in their direction. The band had evidently confined its efforts to the recapture of Crowley, for the shots that still kept up sounded farther and farther away. But Injun did not for an instant slacken the pace that he was setting, nor did he forget to bear around toward the left — a course that would carry them in the general direction of the mine, though some distance below it on the slope to the valley.

It was a question whether to make for the mine and trust their fortunes with John Big Moose and his men, or, now that they were free of the whole mix-up, to continue on their way back to the camp where they had left their horses, some ten or twelve miles away. One thing, more than anything else, argued that they return to the mine, and that was the fact that they were entirely unarmed except for the hunting-knife that Injun had secreted in his shirt; and the long hike through the wilds without gun or revolver did not look attractive. While there probably would be no occasion to protect their lives with gun or rifle, yet there *might be;* and when you need a gun in the wilderness, you need it mighty bad!

On the contrary, if they did go back to the mine, they would again be involved in anything in the way of a scrimmage that occurred.

It seemed likely, from what Injun had been able to make out while watching the pow-wow of the Crows, that the braves were skeptical as to the number of the defenders of the mine. It was likely that they would at least make an effort to find out the strength of the Dakotas, and if they learned the truth, they would undoubtedly attack. As far as being of any assistance to Crowley was concerned, they were helpless. The only possible way of doing anything for him would be to reach the ranch and send out a rescue expedition; and the time that this would consume would make the expedition useless. Long before the time the expedition could even get under way from the Bar O ranch, Crowley either would be in the hands of the Indians or would have made his escape by his own efforts.

Very often, in matters of this kind, the decision is not left to those most interested, but is decided for them by events of a most unexpected character. That was what happened in this case.

CHAPTER XII

TREED BY A GRIZZLY

"I CAN'T see making that trip back to the camp without any guns," said Whitey, as the boys made their way over a particularly rough piece of the mountain-side, "and what's more, I don't want to lose them, either. If we let them stay at the mine now, we'll never have a chance to get them. And yet, now that we're out of it, it seems foolish to get into it all again. What do you think about it, Injun?"

Before Injun had time to reply, something happened. He stopped suddenly and caught Whitey's arm.

"B'ar!" whispered Injun, excitedly. "Come!"

The boys were crossing an open patch of ground that was almost entirely bare of trees. All about them were huge boulders, varying from the size of a cobblestone to others that were twenty feet in diameter. Many of them were rounded and their surfaces slippery, as though they had been churned together for centuries in some great con-

vulsion of Nature until the sharp irregularities had been worn away, and their surfaces almost polished. The task of traversing this spot was not an easy one under any conditions, and anything like haste or speed was almost out of the question. The way required careful picking.

Injun had been the first to see the bear, and he had, of course, cast about him for a place of refuge, but at first glance none offered, and he and Whitey tried to crouch down behind one of the boulders, hoping that they might escape the bear's notice. This hope was vain, however, for before they could scurry to the concealment of the nearest boulder, the bear sighted them, and came lumbering for them. The privacy of his den had been invaded by two Indians, and somebody was going to suffer for it! He had missed the Indians in some way, but here were two boys who would do just as well!

There was very little time to make much of a choice of a place of refuge, but the bear was coming toward them at a rapid pace, and he was not more than a hundred yards away when he had first seen them. But the quick-witted Injun

seized upon the only opportunity in sight. Some twenty or thirty feet away was a large and nearly round boulder whose top was somewhat more than ten feet from the ground. The boulder had been deposited near to a sheer bank from which grew a tough and dwarfed tree that had been broken and split by lightning almost in half. Its one remaining limb extended out over the boulder.

Calling Whitey to follow him, Injun ran quickly up the bank, sheer as it was, and leaping up caught this limb and worked his way along it hanging by his hands, until he could drop on to the boulder. Whitey lost no time in following Injun's lead, and practiced as he was in gymnasium feats, it was an easy matter. He was none too quick, however, for even as he made his way along the limb, the bear rushed underneath him and rearing on his hind legs, made frantic attempts to grab the dangling boy. But Whitey was some little distance out of the bear's reach, and in a moment he dropped safely upon the top of the boulder beside Injun.

Safe? That remained to be seen! The bear

turned and rushed at the boulder, standing on his hind legs and making frantic efforts to draw himself up. But the hard and smooth surface of the boulder and the fact that it bulged slightly at the top gave the bear, gigantic as he was, little chance for a hold. The fact that his first few attempts to mount the rock were futile did not seem to discourage the bear in the least, and he kept right on trying. There was his prey, only a few feet beyond the reach of his claws, and the fact that he could not *quite* reach them, threw him into a rage. His red eyes gleamed wickedly and his great mouth, with its long, sharp teeth, yawned and snapped viciously. He literally danced around the boulder, in his rage and eager ferocity; and if the situation had not been so serious, his actions would have been comical.

"Can he make it?" asked Whitey, his face pale and his breath coming fast.

"Dunno," said Injun stolidly.

And, indeed, there was a very grave doubt about it. While his attempts had been futile, so far, there was a big chance that, circling the rock as he was, the brute might find a lodgment for

those powerful claws that would suffice for drawing himself up.

Injun took the knife from his shirt and knelt on the rock as near to the edge as he dared; and as the bear went around the boulder, Injun faced him, ready to slash at the paws if they found a hold.

This was, indeed, a dangerous business; for a bear is an expert boxer, and is remarkably quick; and such is his strength that one of his little dabs, if it hit Injun's wrist, would probably knock him from the rock. But Injun knew this, and he was taking very few chances; he held the knife as one holds a sword, and if the bear's slap hit anything, it would only be the knife.

"Look out for him!" said Whitey, as the bear made a remarkably quick slap at the knife. "If he ever hits that knife, he may knock you off if you have too tight a hold on it! Gee! If we only had a rifle! Even the six-shooter would help some at this short range!"

But Injun was handling the matter very well, and on two occasions had been able to slash the bear's paws slightly. Had the bear been able to

INJUN FACED HIM, READY TO SLASH AT THE PAWS IF THEY FOUND A HOLD

obtain a hold, it is probable that the knife would have made very little difference as far as making him let go was concerned. A knife is a pitiful thing to fight a bear with, and the slashes that Injun had inflicted on the bear's paws, although they drew blood, served little purpose except to further enrage the animal. He roared and snapped and danced with increased vigor and fury after receiving them.

For at least ten minutes the bear did not abate his attempts to get at the boys; but each additional minute served to increase the boys' confidence, though it did not particularly discourage the bear. But even if it were an assured fact that the bear could not get at them then, it was by no means a very pleasant situation. The boys knew that a bear has a lot of patience, and the chances were that he would wait quite a while before he abandoned something that was so nearly within his reach.

"I've heard that bears," said Whitey, after a time, "when they had a man treed just sat down and waited — maybe for days — until the man got exhausted and fell out of the tree. This brute

looks as though he would *never* give up!" he added, as the bear made a particularly strenuous attempt to climb up. "I wonder if looking him in the eye will do any good?" he continued. "I've heard that wild animals can't stand the human eye — the books say they 'quail before it.' It works with a lion, so they say. He backs down — if you get him right. I'm going to see if this bird will do a little quailing!" And Whitey got down on his knees and tried to look the bear in the eye. He didn't have the slightest difficulty in getting the bear's eyes; in fact, the bear seemed to welcome an exchange of glares, and his wicked little eyes gleamed as he stared at Whitey and renewed his efforts to mount on the rock.

Whitey drew back, involuntarily; looking into the face of an enraged bear at close range isn't pleasant!

"I guess if there was any quailing about it, I did it!" he said, disgustedly. "I'd like to see the folks that make 'em quail in the books take a crack at this baby! Don't talk to me about the power of the human eye! It might work on

a rabbit or on white mice or something, but not on bears!"

After a moment the bear lowered himself to all fours, and sat on his haunches, seldom taking his eyes off the boys, and apparently trying to figure out some other way to get at them.

"Gwan home, you big lummox!" yelled Whitey, making threatening gestures at the bear. "Gwan home! Somebody'll sneak in and get your cubs! Gwan! You moth-eaten lookin' automobile rug! Beat it, while the beating's good!"

Far from sending the bear about his business, this tirade served only to make the bear renew his efforts to scale the rock, and Injun managed to inflict another cut on his paw. It took some time for him to get over this insult, and the bear kept up his dancing and clawing for some minutes, but finally got tired of it and went and sat down again. Then he walked around the rock several times, sniffing and trying to think up a new method of attack.

"Maybe he wants to be petted," said Whitey humorously.

"Woof!" responded the bear, and he again

made an attempt to climb on to the rock. But in a moment he tired of it, and resumed his seat a short distance from the rock.

"I can't seem to suit him, no matter what I do!" said Whitey. "Gee! but he's got a mean disposition! And he looks as though he were going to sit right there for a week! I wonder if it would do any good to shout for help? Some of John Big Moose's men might come and get us out of this."

Injun shook his head: "Crow mebbe come, too," he said; and from his manner, Whitey saw that his companion regarded that possibility as worse than facing the bear alone.

Injun still knelt on the rock, never taking his eyes from the bear, but Whitey had risen to his feet. Suddenly he clutched Injun's shoulder.

"Look!" he said excitedly. "Look what's coming!"

Injun glanced quickly and followed the direction of Whitey's pointing finger. Over the rocks, not a hundred yards away, was another bear headed directly for them!

CHAPTER XIII

A FRIEND INDEED

"For the love o' Mike!" gasped Whitey, as the two boys watched the newcomer shuffle his uncertainly certain way directly toward them. "Seems as though we were in bad enough as it was, without reinforcements coming up to help this brute!"

Injun made no reply, but continued to watch the new arrival closely. Injun knew something about bears and other wild animals; and one of the things he knew was that two bears will never voluntarily consent to an equal and peaceable division of any food or prey that may come their way. Even in captivity this is true. Watch the bears in a zoo, and you will find that at feeding-time the biggest bear will try to take unto himself *all* the food that is put into the den, and will proceed to eat all he can of it, while the smaller bears sit around and watch and whine in weak and pathetic protest. The others can have what

he leaves! The best and happiest of "happy families," that is the pride of every circus or animal show, will quarrel over food; and when the happy family is fed, a man has to stand there with a club to keep them "happy."

Injun was not entirely sure that the new bear was to be considered as "reinforcements." And after a moment or two Whitey began to have his doubts about it, too.

When the new arrival was sufficiently close to allow their jailer to get his scent, their "old friend" diverted his attention from the boys; and getting down on all fours, he faced about in the direction of the oncoming bear, and began to sniff and snort and growl and wave his head from side to side, and advance to meet him. He didn't intend to divide the boys with anybody!

"Looks to me like they're going to fight!" said Whitey, excitedly. "Gee!" he continued, "if they do, it ought to be some scrap!" And then he added, as he thought it over, "We seem to be like the birds in a turkey-shoot. No matter which bear wins, we're going to get it in the neck, anyhow! We belong to the winner!"

"Ugh!" grunted Injun. "Mebbe ain't goin' be no winner!"

"Do you mean that if they fight, there won't be enough left of the winner to make us any trouble?" asked Whitey, a faint hope fluttering within him.

"Dunno," said Injun. "Mebbe fin' out."

By this time there could be no doubt that the first bear intended to chase the other one away if he could, for his manner indicated anything but a cordial welcome. He hadn't invited any other bear to breakfast and he didn't propose to extend any such hospitality. Besides, as he figured it, there wouldn't be enough boy to go 'round if there were going to be company, and he never cared for banquets, anyhow. He advanced steadily and belligerently toward the other bear, roaring and waving his head and scratching up the stones and generally misbehaving himself.

What the other bear thought about it will probably never be known. Indeed, it was doubtful whether he had seen the boys at all, and consequently the breakfast part of it cut no figure with him. But he undoubtedly did understand

that he was in the presence of a gentleman who was looking for trouble, and he was the kind of a bear that when trouble came his way, he gave it a hug. Up to date he had done very little backing-out, and trouble was his dish! He may have had his troubles that day, too; and as I have said before, when a bear is peeved, he takes out his wrath on the first thing that comes along, regardless of what that thing is.

At any rate, he was able-bodied and knew his rights, and he didn't propose to be "buffaloed" or scared by a lot of bellowing and scratching-up of stones. He could bellow and scratch stones a little himself, as he proceeded to demonstrate. He didn't know a thing about "turning the other cheek." And he *said* so, too — as plain as one bear can say it to another.

"Gee!" whispered Whitey, excitedly, "we're going to see something! This is going to be a regular fight!"

The two bears lost little time in getting together. They had no managers to squabble about the weight and the referee and the rules and the loser's end and the price of seats and the

number of rounds. The weights were pretty nearly equal, it was "winner-take-all," and neither of them gave a hoot about the "gate." They had no need of a referee, for they fought under "slaughter-house" rules, with no holds barred. And another thing, this was no "frame-up." Neither had any intention of letting the other "stay," so as to stage another meeting! This fight was going to be on the level and to a finish. The gallery didn't influence them a bit. Many a man will fight — *if somebody is looking at him.* It's a good man who will fight no matter whether any one is looking at him or not. A bear is that kind. There is no four-flush about him.

Every bear is an expert boxer — it is born in him and he practices all the time. To lead and block and duck and side-step are parts of his daily life, and are perfectly natural movements for him to use. And as they came together, the two bears rose on their haunches and walloped each other with blows that would have broken the neck of the strongest lion in the world. They sparred and bit and clawed, each endeavoring to

bring the other into his embrace so that with the powerful claws of his hind feet he might disembowel his enemy. But with equal cleverness and strength, neither could get any decided advantage. But they were doing plenty of damage to each other; the blood ran freely from their wounds, and the air and ground were full of fur.

The two boys watched the fight with breathless interest. It is perhaps doubtful whether, had the chance to slip away unnoticed been presented, they would have availed themselves of it! They had forgotten their dangerous predicament in their excitement! They were going to see it through!

They were doing considerable "rooting," too, — for the newcomer, of course. As the fight progressed, they had come to regard him as their savior — if savior they were to have. He had, at least, broken up the little tête-à-tête that the first bear had been having with them, and if they should eventually escape, it would probably be due to his interference.

"Gee!" gasped Whitey, as the intruder landed a tremendous and resounding cuff high up on the

other's head, and which took most of an ear and considerable hide, "that was a peach! I'll bet there was a headache in that one! Give it to him! I told him to beat it while the beating was good, and he wouldn't do it! I'll bet he wishes he had taken my advice! Sock him a couple more like that one and you get the decision!"

After a moment, when the bears had fought themselves some distance away from the rock, Whitey looked about him.

"Have we got a chance to get away, Injun? They don't seem to be paying much attention to us."

Injun shook his head, decidedly. He knew that if they made any break for liberty there was a chance that both bears would forget their quarrel and take after them — "A b'ar bein' a queer animile an' y' can't always figger him," as Bill Jordan had remarked in one of his talks to the boys. And the wisdom of this was apparent a few moments later when Whitey, in his excitement, slipped, and would have gone off the rock had not Injun caught him, and dragged him back to safety. It was a narrow escape, for there

could be no possible doubt that the bear that had chased them on to the rock, and who probably regarded them as his own property, made a slight but unmistakable movement as though to leave the fight and give his attention to the boy.

His slight carelessness, however, cost him something; for the other bear, taking advantage of his momentary forgetfulness, succeeded in getting a hold upon him that permitted him to rip his opponent down the front with his hind claws. A more than usual ferocious roar from the victim gave evidence of how the blow had told, as well as the welter of blood that followed it. But far from lessening the attack of the bear, the wound seemed to increase it. He tore into his opponent with indescribable ferocity, and for a moment seemed to be getting even, with a vengeance. But this was only momentary, and was, no doubt, a last, desperate effort to stem the tide that he felt was setting in against him. He was making a tremendous snarling and bellowing; but in the loudest roar there seemed to be a note of agonized fear that belied its ferocious challenge. It seemed the howl of anguish and protest and hate, impo-

tent and terror-stricken, that most animals give when they know that they are beaten and that death and destruction are inevitable.

That rip down the front had plainly been the deciding blow; and in a moment, in the very midst of what seemed to be a savage charge, the bear turned tail, with a howl of defeat, and tried to stagger away. He never had a chance. Not only was the other bear upon him in an instant, but he was too weak to run another step; and he sank in his tracks, dead!

The victor assured himself of this fact, and when he got through assuring himself, there was not the slightest chance that the other bear would ever come to life to dispute him again! There are no rules among bears about hitting when one is down! Then he cast one look at the boys — he was not fifty feet away — took an unsteady step toward them, but turned and limped painfully away! When the boys saw the front of him as he turned toward them, they knew very well why he was willing to call it a day and go home! A hundred yards from the rock, he, too, sank down on the ground, but the boys did not go to him

to see if he were dead! They had not the slightest curiosity in that direction! Well they remembered what Bill Jordan had told them.

"When yo' hev *killed* a b'ar," said Bill, "you want t' climb a tree an' set thar fer 'bout a hour. 'F he don't move, in thet time, yo' climb down an' run *th' other way* as fast as yo'r legs'll take yo'! Thet's th' way t' kill a b'ar!"

When they slid down off of the rock neither one of the boys found that his legs were any too steady — they had been through considerable excitement. Compelled to watch a bloody battle between Titans of the mountains, in which *you* are the prize, is not exactly steadying to the nerves! But such steadiness of leg as they had, they put to the best advantage, in the way that Bill Jordan had suggested.

CHAPTER XIV

CROWLEY'S GET-AWAY

When Crowley, gun in hand, stood beside the tree in practically the same position in which he had been tied, and watched the boys as they ran swiftly and silently down the slope, he had the satisfaction of feeling that the boys were pretty well out of the scrape, and that the Crows had overlooked the fact that he still wore his belt of cartridges. He had been overcome in a rough-and-tumble fight — three or four of the Crows had pounced upon him unawares — and he had given them about all they wanted to do to get him "hog-tied" without doing more than take his six-gun from its holster, which, indeed, they had done in the first instant of their attack on him. They may not have actually overlooked the belt, for a cartridge-belt isn't of any great value without a gun. What they *had* overlooked, however, was the gun that he had concealed in his shirt. The attack had been so quick, and his hands had been engaged in such a manner, that

he had no opportunity to reach the gun during the struggle. At any rate, he was in a position, now, to give an account of himself; and while he had little idea that he would be able to get away unhurt, he knew that he at least had a chance.

He slipped behind the tree to which he had been tied and keeping it in line with the braves, who were still arguing heatedly and seemed to be taking a vote on some question, he darted to another, and another, until he was some thirty or forty yards away from where he had started.

Suddenly there was a yell, as one of the braves saw that he was missing from the tree; the conference broke up hurriedly, and the Indians sprang to their feet and looked eagerly about to locate the direction that he had taken. They, of course, believed him unarmed, and exposed themselves openly. A shot from his revolver dropped one of them in his tracks, and in the confusion that followed, most of the braves taking refuge behind trees, Crowley materially increased the distance between them. The braves seemed in doubt also as to whether the shot had been fired

by one of the escaped trio, or by one of the Dakotas who had followed the boys.

But the keen-eyed Indians soon located Crowley, as he darted from tree to tree, and with a yell and a fusillade of shots they started after him. But another shot, which took effect upon the foremost of the pursuers, caused the others to proceed with increased caution, and Crowley made good use of the hesitation. He ran down the slope, but in a direction diagonal to that taken by the boys and to the right, and every moment he widened the distance between himself and his pursuers. It was evident that they had considerable respect for that six-gun of his, after a third shot had winged another of the braves.

But even with the advantage that he now had, and with all the respect that the Indians had for his revolver, Crowley knew, and the Crows knew, that he had little chance of eventually making his escape, provided the red men persisted in the chase. There is not one white man in a hundred that is a match for the ordinary Indian in the woods; and there is not a white man in the world

that is a match for some Indians when it comes to stalking each other in the wilderness.

But there was one thing that both parties overlooked — the Dakotas at the mine. They were within easy hearing distance of the shots that the Crows had sent after Crowley, and neither John Big Moose nor anybody else was going to keep them from seeing what was up.

The natural supposition was that the Crows had been attacked by somebody, and eight of the Dakotas went to investigate. And John Big Moose, leaving four men on guard, followed after them. They made their way swiftly through the woods, and soon came upon one of the wounded men who had fallen a victim to Crowley's gun. From him no information in regard to what had happened could be extracted, but John Big Moose was not slow to take advantage of the situation. The chase after Crowley had left the camp of the Crows entirely unprotected, and John and his Indians proceeded to take possession of all their horses, provisions, and equipment and transport them forthwith to the mine. To say that this was what is known as a *coup* is putting it mildly

— "scoop" would be a better word — and it put John Big Moose in a position to dictate about any terms that he desired.

"Let them chase their heads off after the white man! When they come back and find everything gone, maybe they will listen to reason," argued John.

There was not a doubt in the world that the boys had stirred up quite a mess in the mountains!

In his efforts to escape, Crowley was greatly handicapped by the fact that he was almost entirely ignorant of the lay of the land, while it was probable that the Indians knew every foot of it. At the outset his only object was to get away from where he was — anywhere would do. But as he went on and on, he realized that at almost any moment he might run into a something that was impassable — a precipice down which he could not climb, or a gulch that had no outlet — and thus he would be compelled to retrace his steps, and be forced, in all probability, to walk right into his pursuers. And, therefore, he kept his eyes open for any sort of suitable hiding-

place wherein he could hide himself until he could double back on his trail or until his pursuers gave up the chase.

All the while he was gradually descending the mountain, and there were many open spaces to be traversed, and these were beset with dangers; for while he crossed one of the open places he offered a fair mark to the rifles that were behind him. On two occasions, when he thought that perhaps he might have either distanced his pursuers or thrown them off his track, a shot passing dangerously close to him told him that such was not the case.

He was at a further disadvantage in that he was armed only with his six-shooter with a far more limited range than that of a rifle; and he knew that if once he left the mountains and started across the open, rolling foothills, the Indians could pick him off at their leisure, and he would be unable to reply to their fire with any effect. As Crowley figured it, "he was a hundred miles from anywhere, an' all uphill goin'." The chance of meeting any party of men who would or could rescue him was very small; and it would be

many hours before darkness would come to his aid. When Crowley told Whitey that he was "in Dutch," he had said something!

However, he was vastly better off as he was now than when tied to a tree, and he had something to be thankful for. Give a man like Crowley a six-shooter and plenty of cartridges, and he will face almost any situation with some degree of confidence.

As the little man said, when he pulled his gun on the big bully who was about to thrash him, "Hol' on, man! Don't come near me! God Almighty made some men big an' some men little — but Cap'n Colt, he made all men th' same size!"

As Crowley expressed it, afterwards, "Ef I'd 'a' had a hoss, an' bin anywhere a hoss c'd keep his footin', I wouldn't 'a' keered a dern ef th' hull Piute Nation was after me! But take it from me, them things" — indicating his high-heeled boots — "ain't no fit thing t' go gallopin' 'round no mount'n with!"

At one place, he saw a small, natural cave that seemed to offer a refuge, and he ran toward it,

estimating its advantages and disadvantages. Once in there, he might put up a fight against big odds; but he would be like a rat in a trap, and there *is* such a thing as smoking a man out of a hole like that. It might be very shallow and afford little protection, and, besides, the opening was so obvious that the pursuing Indians would never pass it without investigating it; and he concluded to pass up the cave on the chance of finding something better.

As it turned out, it was a wise choice. Within a few moments after Crowley had disregarded the cave and had gone on his way, two of his pursuers came to the spot, and immediately proceeded to investigate the cave. They entered it cautiously, but in about a minute there was a wild and panic-stricken yell from within the cave, and the two Indians came dashing out at a pace that challenged all sprint records, and bounded away over the rocks in different directions.

The cause of the panic appeared in the opening, and one good look at him was enough to justify any haste in going away from there that the two

Indians had displayed. It was a huge grizzly bear, weighing, perhaps, a thousand pounds, and he was not in any very amiable mood, either. In fact, he was "mad clear through." That he resented this intrusion on his privacy could not be doubted; and that he intended to make somebody suffer for it was equally evident. The fact that the Indians had taken two directions made him hesitate for a moment, but after a preliminary snort he shambled and shuffled away over the rocks at a speed that was most deceiving. He was moving a good deal faster than he looked to be.

It is probable that a grizzly can go over rough mountainous country faster than any other animal. He is sure-footed, and his huge weight, tough hide, and thick coat make almost any obstacle seem trivial. Underbrush and briars and even small saplings mean nothing to him, but are brushed aside or trampled down as though they were paper.

And a grizzly is, too, perhaps the most revengeful of all beasts, and nurses a seemingly perpetual grouch. When he is aroused and angry, he takes it out on the first thing that comes in his way.

If he can't get the object of his wrath, something else will do just as well — he isn't particular what it is. If he couldn't get those Indians that came into his home without an invitation, he would get somebody or something. And he lurched along over the rocks with the full intent of "bustin' somethin' wide open."

The incident of the grizzly had given Crowley a few moments' leeway, though he didn't know it. He had, of course, heard the yells of the Indians, but he had thought them to be the cries of his pursuers who were now confident that they were closing in on him, and he redoubled his efforts.

As he ran he suddenly found himself upon the bank of a small creek, not more than ten or twelve feet across, and the bank on the opposite side was slightly overhanging and covered with vines and brush. There was no time to look for a ford, and Crowley tried the jump unhesitatingly.

It would have been an easy jump for almost any one, under ordinary circumstances; but some fifteen or twenty years spent in the saddle do not develop or limber up a man's jumping

muscles, especially; nor are high-heeled boots the kind of footwear usually adopted by our best jumpers. Besides, the take-off was bad — a little lower than the opposite bank, and the edge was crumbly and uneven.

At any rate, although Crowley made a gallant effort, he struck the edge of the bank and came down with a tremendous splash in the deep, swift current; and before he could grab a protruding root, or could steady himself in any way, he was whirled around and over and under and about, until he brought up against the same bank, several yards downstream. Instinctively he grabbed hold of anything that offered, and with an effort he got a foothold and steadied himself until he got his bearings.

"Sufferin' catamount!" he grunted (or words to that effect), as soon as he got his breath, "I wonder what in Sam Hill is gonna happen t' me next!"

As he looked about him, however, he came to the conclusion that what had seemed a bad mishap might prove to be a blessing. He stood in the water nearly to his arm-pits; over his head

arched the bank of the stream, and its grass and vines formed a sort of curtain before him, which not only concealed him, but through which he could watch the approaches to the stream. It was not the most comfortable place in the world, for the water of those mountain streams is not what would be called warm; but bad as the situation was, it looked a heap sight better to Crowley than to be "gallopin' over th' rocks a few jumps ahead o' them Piutes!" (Any Indian that Crowley did not like was always a "Piute" to him.)

He at once took such measures as he could to keep his six-shooter and ammunition dry, for cartridges will only stand a limited amount of soaking before becoming useless, so he unfastening his cartridge-belt and winding it around his neck, held his revolver out of the water. By pressing against the bank, which curved slightly out at that point, he found that it was not a difficult matter to maintain his position; and, on the whole, Crowley came to the conclusion that things "might 'a' bin a hull lot worse!"

Within a few moments, however, Crowley had reason to change his mind.

"An' thar I stud, feelin' like a frog on a lily-pad, er one o' them mushrats," said Crowley, describing it to the boys afterwards, "a-peekin' out o' thet grass an' stuff thet hung down in front o' me, scrougin' up ag'in th' bank t' keep from gittin' swep' away. An' mebbe yo' think thet water wasn't cold! An' me all het up with runnin' like I did! I reck'n I was jest about as comf'table as a man settin' into th' 'lectric chair!

"'By Judas!' I says t' myself, 'this here ain't never goin' t' do!' I says. Thet there water was gittin' colder an' colder, an' 't wa'n't no cinch keepin' a foothold, neither. An' jest about th' time I was makin' up my mind t' take a chanct an' come out, I hears a shufflin' an' a sniffin', an' peekin' out, I sees a big grizzly — I guess mebbe he was the ol' gran'daddy of 'em all — slouchin' along on th' opp'site bank, not mor'n twenty feet away.

"Right thar, I thought mebbe I better stay whar I was, water er no water — seein' as I'd a heap sight ruther be froze t' death and drowned than e't up by one o' them varmints. He was swingin' from side to side, an' wavin' thet nose

o' his'n 'round in the air, an' then he stops, an' I reck'ns it's all off, an' draws down my head like a snappin'-turkle till only my eyes is 'bove water. I knew 'f he got my scent, it was good-night. 'Come on in,' I says to myself; 'the water's fine!' An' fer a spell, it looked as tho' he were goin' t' accep' th' invitation. He come down t' th' edge o' the creek, not more'n a dozen feet from me; but all he done was take a few laps o' water, an' then he loped off about his business. Then I realizes thet I'd been holdin' my breath fer upwards o' two or three minutes, an' I takes a long one.

"'Buck Crowley,' I says t' myself, 'climb out'n this here water-hole an' go about yo'r business! A man thet's born t' be hung ain't goin' t' git b'ar-bit er Injun-massycreed er croaked no other way — not after whut yo' bin through recent, he ain't!' An' th' signs sure did p'int thet way. It looked like I was bein' saved fer some purpose, an' 't 'peared t' me thet hangin' was 'bout as likely's anything.

"In one way I was almighty glad t' see thet there b'ar, fer I knowed thet ef anything in th'

world'd make them Piutes git up and git from thet vicin'ty it was a grizzly. I ain't never saw no Injuns as hankered after no close communion with them animals — not less'n the' was 'bout a million in the outfit an' all on hosses. An Injun'll giv' Mr. B'ar his hull half o' th' road, any time — an' mebbe a little more, 'f th' b'ar seems t' want it — which he mos' gener'ly do. An' I ain't sayin' thet I blames Injuns fer feelin' thet way. A b'ar is bad medicine.

"I reck'n thet a full growed he-grizzly kin lick anything on four legs, less'n 't is an elephant; an' ef the' was t' be a fight between them two animals, dog-gone ef I wouldn't take a ticket on t' ba'r! An' whut I *do* know is, thet ef anybody's got a pet tager er a li'n thet they think a lot of, they had better not let 'em come fussin' 'round a grizzly, fer th' grizzly won't leave enough of 'em to pay fer callin' in a taxi-dermist. No, *sir!* Thet li'n er tager won't never ornament no museum o' nacher'l hist'ry!

"They do say thet one o' them Canada rams'll giv' a b'ar an awful argument. Them rams'll weight 'long 'bout two hunderd; an' when they

meets up with a b'ar, they don't duck. They backs off 'bout a hunderd feet er so, an' come a-runnin', head down an' hell-bent fer 'lection. Th' b'ar raises up on his hind legs and holds out his arms to give 'em a hug, but th' ram comes too fast; an' he lands thet hard head an' horns o' his'n with two hunderd pounds o' weight behind it, goin' at a muzzle-veloc'ty of about six mile a minnit, kerplog ag'in th' b'ar's belly! An' th' b'ar goes down like a ten-pin, 'ith all th' wind knocked out'n him. An' when he grabs t' giv' th' ram a hug, he don't grab nuthin'!

"Then they repeats th' performance some seven er ' even times, 'ithout no pertic'ler variations, till, mos' gener'ly, th' b'ar figgers his solar-plexus is gettin' a little too much het up, an' thet he ain't gettin' much of a reputation by lickin' little thing like a sheep, anyhow, an' he takes a run-out powder. Thet's the way them Canada lumber-jacks tell it. But I dunno.

"Mebbe them rams kin pull thet stuff on some b'ars — them brown an' black ones — but I have m' doubts 'bout a ram bein' able t' put thet over onto a grizzly. A grizzly makes a swipe

at anything thet is comin' to him, an' ef he ever *did* land on Mr. Ram, with thet forearm o' his'n — 'bout a foot thick, I guess it is — an' them six-inch claws! Oh, boy! 'F a Canada ram mixes it up with a grizzly, I guess it'd be like th' bull-dog thet tackled th' tager — yo' got t' hand it to him fer courage, but yo' don't think a whole lot of his judgment!

"Well," continued Crowley, "t' git back t' whar I was. As soon as I was satisfied th' b'ar had went fur 'nuff so's I wouldn't be li'ble t' run into him, I climbs out o' th' water, an' puts my feet in motion in th' op'site d'rection from whut th' b'ar took, as near as I c'd figger, an' I kep' tryin' t' bear down towards th' base o' th' mount'n, hopin' t' strike some kind of a trail. But, Lawd! A man does git mixed up 'f he ain't 'customed t' bein' into th' mount'ns much, with all th' turnin' an' twistin' an' climbin', an' I wa'n't in no position t' set down an' do much figgerin' out a route. 'Most any way t' git away from whar I was was good 'nuff fer me! I was jest on my way — thet was all! I hadn't seen hide ner hair o' th' Piutes fer some twenty minnits er more, but

I wasn't settin' no great store by thet, knowin' how them sneakin' devils is li'ble t' crop up out o' nowheres, an' I c'd feel myself gettin' shot in th' back 'bout ev'ry minnit.

"But nuthin' like thet happens. I come lopin' 'round a corner, not knowin' thet th' earth come to a end right 'bout thar; an' tryin' t' check my mad c'reer, I steps onto a round stone, my ankle turns, an' I goes pitchin' sideways an' t' other-end-up fer Sunday, an' slides down a steep place — pretty near a cliff she was — 'bout a mile or two long, scratchin' an' scrabblin' an' tryin' t' ketch a-holt o' anythin' thet'd hol' me back, an' lands at th' bottom ker-slam ag'in a rock er somethin' — an' right thar somebuddy turned off th' sunshine!

"I ain't no idea how long I lays thar, but when I cum to, I tries t' stan' up, an' I can't make it — ankle's plumb on th' blink, an' I has a thirst like a camel. I manages t' crawl downhill a piece, an' fin'ly I come t' a little trickle o' water. Considerin' my experience jest a spell before, when th' b'ar hed me treed in th' water, y' wouldn't think I'd need none. But I wanna say thet I drank

an' drank till, when I looked up, I didn't expect t' see no more stream — I thought I'd lapped her all up! I took off my boot an' bathed th' ankle, which was some big — not carin' by this time whether I got winged by a Injun er not. But seems like thar wa'n't none around, an' I crawls away, not bein' able t' git my boot on, to a snug place between two rocks up on a sort o' ledge; an' thar I stays till th' next day, restin' up my foot. An' — haw, haw! How I nursed thet six-gun an' them ca'tridges! Seemed like I was safe 'nuff, long's I hed them with me!

"Long towards evenin' th' nex' day, th' ankle bein' some better, I crawls out an' perceeds on my way, bein' some hongry. Ef I'd 'a' saw a squirrel eatin' a nut, I'd 'a' give him a fight fer it! An' th' rest I guess you boys knows. Fer I hedn't gone more'n forty rods when I runs into this here John Big Moose person, an' him an' me goes to th' mat."

CHAPTER XV

IN ENEMY HANDS

As the boys scurried over the rough ground and through the woods, it seemed to Whitey that they had been upon the rock for hours; but in reality the entire incident had occupied something like half an hour. They felt that they were by no means "out of the woods" yet; for while they were well away from the main body of the Crows, who were on the mountain above the mine, yet there were undoubtedly some of the attacking party posted on the slope below. In order to reach the mine and recover their weapons, it would be necessary to pass them; and under the circumstances, this was no easy matter.

And yet, after their experience with the bear, the prospect of the all-day trip back to the camp without weapons did not appear attractive; and of the two evils the risk of capture by the Crows seemed the less. Left to himself, it is doubtful if Whitey could have found his way back to the mine without the greatest difficulty — perhaps

not at all; for he had not as yet developed that sense of direction so necessary to the expert in woodcraft or mountaineering. But such a thing was second-nature to Injun. Once over a region was enough for him. He never forgot the way. He noticed and stored up in his memory a thousand little things that served as guide-posts in the future. After they had plunged ahead for some time in an apparently aimless attempt to get away from the scene of the bear-fight, Whitey could not have told where they were or in what direction the mine lay to save his life.

"Have you any idea where we are, Injun?" he asked, in a low tone.

Injun nodded — "the pathless woods" were not pathless to him.

"Well, where are we headed?" asked Whitey. "I think we better take the chances of going back to the mine, rather than the chances of going back to the horses and then over that long trail to the ranch without a gun, don't you?"

"Me get 'um — you wait?" queried Injun.

"No," said Whitey, "I don't think that's a good plan. While I think one of us stands a

better chance to get there than two, yet I think we better stick together. Besides, if one of us is to go, it might better be me, for neither the Dakotas nor the Crows will be so apt to harm me as they will you. We'll tackle it together!"

Injun made no objection to this, and he turned at almost right angles to the course they were taking, much to the surprise of Whitey. But he had learned from many former experiences that it was best to trust implicitly to his companion, and he unhesitatingly followed his lead. Whitey knew, from the time that had passed during their flight from the Crows after liberating Crowley and their hold-up by the bear, that they could not be a very great distance from the mine, but he was utterly at sea as to its direction. Injun seemed to have no doubts about the matter, and proceeded confidently, but cautiously. Evidently there was no fight in progress between the Dakotas and the Crows, for the boys were near enough to have heard the shots had there been a conflict. Whether this would be of advantage or not remained to be seen — certainly, each of the bands would be on the lookout for any one

approaching. Their way lay over rough, stony ground, and amid a rather sparse sprinkling of trees that afforded little chance of concealment; and more than once Injun felt inclined to turn back and approach the mine from the other direction. But he knew that the mine was but a short distance away in a straight line, and he disliked to make a long detour with the chance of running into the main body of the Crows that had spread out in their hunt for Crowley.

"It doesn't look like we had a very good chance of getting by," whispered Whitey, as he glanced about him. "If they are on the lookout for anybody, they ought to see us! But if we once get out of this open place and among the thick brush, perhaps we may be able to get away with it. I sure don't like to think of what will happen to us if those Indians catch us."

Injun was going "close to the ground," ducking behind everything that offered the slightest cover, and Whitey was doing his best to follow Injun's example. On the left was a small gully not more than six or eight feet wide, and really little more than a crack between two rocks, and

into this Injun turned and Whitey after him. They had gone but a few steps, when, as they neared the mouth of the gully, an Indian stepped out and covered them with his gun. Instinctively, Whitey turned to go back, but found himself confronted by another Indian who had stepped into the gully behind them as they had entered.

"Talk about a rat-trap!" said Whitey. "It isn't in it with this! Hey! There!" he called to the Indians. "Don't shoot — we're friends! We got into this by trying to get a square deal for everybody! We don't belong to John Big Moose's party any more than we belong to you!" he added, realizing that the Indians were Crows.

How much of this the Indians understood there is no way of telling; but at any rate it seemed to have very little influence on their actions. The Indian behind the boys urged them forward with the muzzle of his rifle, and as they came out of the gully they were seized by three Indians who were waiting.

"You talk to 'em, Injun," said Whitey. "Tell 'em we're neutral!"

Injun gestured away in hand-talk, trying to explain that they were doing their best to be non-combatants; but what he said did not seem to have the slightest effect. The boys were grabbed and hustled off down the slope of the mountain in no leisurely or gentle manner, being urged along by vigorous prods from the muzzle of the rifle of the nearest of the captors.

"Hey! Go easy there!" said Whitey to one of them, after a particularly hard jab. "What do you think you're —"

The remonstrance remained unfinished, as a prod on the ribs from the Indian on the other side of him knocked all the wind out of the boy. Whitey saw that it was the best plan to follow Injun's lead and take whatever was coming to him in silence. But he made up his mind that if he ever got the chance, he would repay those prods with interest.

After some fifteen or twenty minutes of this, during which they had made remarkable progress, they came to the main body of the Indians that were gathered on a small, level space below an overhanging rock. There was a council or

pow-wow in progress, and though their coming created no outward excitement, it was evident that the Crows felt a keen satisfaction in the capture of the boys. Several of the braves came to them as soon as they arrived, and quickly bound their feet as well as their hands and pushed the boys over unceremoniously on to the ground. This done, they returned to the pow-wow, which now became excited in the extreme.

"Can you make out what they're saying?" asked Whitey of Injun in a low tone.

Injun did not at once reply. "Crow chase him C'owley — Dakota come steal horse. Got 'em at mine," reported Injun, at length.

"That means that these birds are licked, don't it?" asked Whitey.

Injun signed to Whitey to keep still. While he could not understand what was being said, he could read the signs, for all Indians unconsciously use some signs when talking, and he suspected enough to realize that their own situation was desperate. The Crows evidently believed that Injun and Whitey belonged to the Dakotas' expedition, and they proposed to make

use of them in getting back their horses and, possibly, a share in the mine.

"Gee!" whispered Whitey. "First two bears squabble over us, and now the Crows and Dakotas! I hope the thing comes out the same way! I hope they kill each other off, just like the bears did! I could enjoy seeing that big guy that poked me in the ribs with his rifle get his!"

The more he thought about it, however, the less likely this possibility seemed. He had read stories about bandits who held people for ransom, and if their friends delayed the payment, had a nice little habit of slicing off an ear or a few toes and sending them to the friends as a reminder that the ransom was overdue. This did not seem very cheerful. But he remembered that other bandits had been foiled, too; and he resolved to await developments as calmly as possible.

These were not long in coming; for in a few moments the pow-wow broke up after two or three of the braves had made speeches and some kind of an agreement had been reached.

"What do you suppose they have decided to do?" asked Whitey, anxiously.

"Dunno," said Injun, gravely. He knew that he and Whitey were to be pawns in the game, but just what part they were to play he did not know. He was not long in ignorance, however. Several of the Indians came over to the boys, and lifting Injun to his feet, they took off the thongs that bound his hands and feet, — because Injun could not talk to them without the use of his hands, — and led him over to the council. He was placed before three of the men who seemed to be directing the affairs and they gave him instructions.

He was told that he must go to John Big Moose, tell him that the white boy was held a prisoner by the Crows, and that he would be returned to the Dakotas only upon condition that the horses of the Crows were given back and they also be allowed a share in the mine. In case John Big Moose refused these terms, the white boy would be killed. And, in any event, whether the Dakotas accepted or rejected these terms, he, Injun, must return to the camp of the Crows. In case he did not return, Whitey would pay the penalty with his life!

In vain Injun explained that neither he nor Whitey was any part or parcel of, or had any interest in, John Big Moose and his Dakotas, or that the Dakotas had any interest in them. The Crows would not argue the question, and he was told to go, and that upon what he did would depend Whitey's fate as well as his own! And he was given until sunset to perform his mission and to return!

A pretty severe test for a boy not yet sixteen! He was not even allowed to communicate with Whitey; and when the boy saw Injun disappear in the direction of the mine, he could only surmise what his errand was; but he felt that he, himself, was to be the bone of contention.

He was given little time for reflection, however, for no sooner was Injun out of sight than two of the braves approached him, took the bonds from his feet, and lifting him up started down the mountain, one on either side of him.

Whitey saw plainly that it would be of no use to offer any protest and so he hurried along beside them as well as he could (walking downhill over very rough ground, with your hands tied

behind you, is not a wishful job, as Bill Jordan would put it), but he resolved to keep a stiff upper lip, and not to *show* any fear, however much he might *feel*.

To say that he felt no fear would be far from the truth. Anybody, man or boy, placed in a similar position would feel fear. He reasoned, however, that he was in no immediate danger, as it was evidently the intention of the Crows to make use of him as a hostage, and for that reason his captors would take good care that nothing happened to him until he had served his purpose. He also knew that the West of to-day is not the same as the West of the fifties and sixties. The killing of a white man by Indians is a much more serious matter — for the Indians! — than it was fifty years ago. (Probably, it amounted to about the same thing to the white man!) And such acts were almost invariably visited by the severest punishment upon the tribe that did the killing. In the talks that he had heard at the ranch, he had gathered that the Indians of that country were well aware of this, having had many a severe lesson; and he

had come to regard any danger from them, in ordinary times, as almost negligible. But were these ordinary times? Decidedly, they were not. Two bands of Indians of different tribes were at what amounted to war; and he had interfered in it distinctly to the disadvantage of the band that held him captive. By liberating Crowley he had been the indirect cause of the loss of the horses belonging to the Crows, and he knew that an Indian is not inclined to be very forgiving of so deep an injury as that; and once an Indian's enmity is aroused, he often sets consequences at naught.

For perhaps half an hour Whitey was hustled and hurried this way and that, uphill and downhill, over rocks and among trees and brush, often stumbling and falling, only to be yanked to his feet by his two guards, until they came to some thick brush that covered the base of a cliff that was perhaps twenty feet high. The brush and scrub grew up a ledge about ten feet in width, from which there was another drop of perhaps thirty feet or more; the rock, the ledge, and the drop from the ledge forming something like two

steps of a gigantic stairway. Whitey was hustled some twenty feet along the ledge, and one of his captors, pulling aside the brush, disclosed a small cave — really little more than a crack or hole in the rock — perhaps four feet in height and three in width — and into this Whitey was thrust; and the two guards, after jabbering something in their own language, covered the hole with brush, and sat down on the ledge to wait.

If there had been nothing before the hole there would have been very little light five or six feet from the entrance; but when covered by the brush the darkness was impenetrable; and the low roof or ceiling, which made standing erect impossible, added to the discomfort of the situation. After standing in a stooped position for a moment or two, Whitey sat down upon the damp floor to do a little thinking.

For some time he tried to find a sharp edge of rock against which he might rub the thongs that bound his wrists until he had severed them; but, although he had read about this method of releasing one's self, he found that in practice it was not so easy as in reading. And, after a time, in

which he succeeded in bruising his hands considerably, he gave it up. He also tried to bring his hands in front of him by bringing them down under his legs and over his feet; but in this, too, he was unsuccessful, for the thongs were well up on his wrists; and although he was extremely agile and supple, and a good gymnast, he found it impossible.

In his efforts to do this and to find a sharp edge of rock to cut the thongs, he had done considerable writhing, and without knowing it he had worked himself some distance back into the cave. He had also muttered a few words of impatience at his inability to free himself.

As he thrust out one of his legs in one of his gyrations, his foot pressed against something soft — or, at least, something which he knew was not rock. And immediately, a hand clutched his arm and a voice whispered in his ear: "Yo' white man — me white man, too! Sssh! Yo' turn 'roun' dees way — I tak' t'ong off yo' han's!"

And Whitey recognized the voice of Pedro!

CHAPTER XVI

BILL JORDAN RETURNS

When Bill Jordan returned to the ranch from his trip to New York, which had been extended a little longer than he had expected, he received a surprise which made him regret more than ever that his enforced sojourn in the big city had prevented him from going "prospectin'" with the two boys. Injun and Whitey were not back yet.

No sooner had Bill arrived at the ranch one morning, along toward noon, than Walker and Bassett rode into the corral. They called him aside from the other men as though they had some news of importance.

"Whut's on yo'r mind?" asked Bill, as soon as they were alone.

"Wal," said Walker, "mebbe it's somethin' an' mebbe it ain't — we figgered mebbe yo' oughta know 'bout it an' decide. Me an' Bassett meets up with an Injun — one o' th' same breed as our kid — an' fur's we c'd jedge from

what he told, the's hell broke loose among th' Injuns over to the mount'ns. Seems like the's two tribes mixed up into the fracas — one ag'in' t' other, in a kind of a free-fer-all. We figgered 't mebbe all this was comin' off somewheres near th' vicinities them two boys was infestin', an' knowin' their capac'ty fer gettin' inta trouble, it might be well t' — "

"You said somethin'!" said Bill, plainly worried. "Yo' ain't heard nuthin' from 'em sence they started, I take it?" he asked.

"Th' mails ain't been whut yo' c'd call reg'ler between here an' them mount'ns," said Bassett, dryly.

"The' ain't nuthin' t' do but t' hustle over thar soon's we kin," said Bill. "I bin hevin' a hunch thet mebbe somethin' was detainin' them boys — I thought 'bout it on th' train an' sence I bin here. We better start soon's we kin. Doggone 'f they ain't dandies fer huntin' trouble! 'F anythin' was t' happen t' thet Whitey — me bein' responsible fer 'im, in a way o' speakin' — I dunno's I'd ever hev th' nerve t' face th' Boss ag'in — let alone Mrs. Sherwood — she

sets a heap o' store by thet kid. An' thet there Injun is consider'ble boy, too — 'cordin' t' my way o' thinkin'."

"Who'd better go?" asked Walker, looking over at the men at the corral.

"Wal," said Bill, thoughtfully, winking at Bassett, "I reck'n me an' Bassett an' Buck Higgins an' Shorty Palmer'll be 'nuff. Walker, yo' take charge o' things here while I'm gone."

"Yeah?" said Walker, bristling with indignation. "Me take charge here, hey? Well, ef ther's yo'r idea, I quit, right now! I'm fired! I hands myself th' blue envelope! An' I ain't subjec' t' yo'r orders! I'm goin' along with th' party, er I'm goin' alone! Yo' an' th' ranch kin go plumb to!"

"O' co'se," said Bill, grinning, "'f yo' feels thataway 'bout it, I reck'n mebbe Shorty Palmer is 'lected to my job 'stead o' yo'."

Walker laughed. "Bill," he said, "I've knowed yo' fer some consid'ble spell, an' I can't tell yet when yo're kiddin'! I guess I didn't receive no blue envelope! But lemme tell yo' somethin'," he continued, lowering his voice and indicating

the men at the corral, "ef them boys over there gets th' idea of whut's up, yo' ner nobuddy else kin keep 'em from goin' along. The' won't be nobuddy stay here but Sing Wong, an' I got my doubts 'bout him — him likin' them kids a whole lot — fer a Chink."

"Them are words o' wisdom," said Bassett. "Them cow-waddies will shore want t' go 'long. An' seein' as the's two hull tribes o' Injuns into this here mess, I misdoubts if mebbe they ought-n't t' go."

Bill thought for a time: "No," he said, finally, "I reck'n thet us three an' Buck Higgins kin turn th' trick. Was Injun's people aimin' t' take a hand into th' game 'count o' him bein' mebbe in it?"

"I reck'n not," said Walker; "th' cuss thet tole us 'bout it were takin' a bunch o' beaded moccasins over to th' Junction, an' didn't 'pear t' be het up 'bout it."

"Mebbe it's jest as well they don't mix in," said Bill. "It'd mebbe complicate matters an' wouldn't do no great good. Fix up a pack-horse an' we'll start in ten minutes. We better

go different ways, t' th'ow the boys off, an' meet at the fork."

And he hurried away to give orders to Shorty Palmer in regard to the conduct of the ranch in his absence.

Within an hour the four men met at the fork of the creek, some miles from the ranch; and, turning their horses' heads to the northwest, began the long, uphill ride that would carry them into the mountains.

The farther they rode the more serious the situation of Whitey and Injun seemed to Jordan. The chance of an Indian fight had not entered into his calculations; such a thing had not happened, except in a small way, within his recollection. While there was little for the boys to fear from the Indians in ordinary times, Jordan knew that when two tribes became embroiled, the "innocent bystander" did not occupy a very safe position.

The wars between the different tribes of Indians were, perhaps, even more bitter and relentless than those which they waged against the whites; and Jordan felt that if the boys were

caught in an affair of this kind, the fact that they had nothing to do with it might mean little in determining their fate.

"Doggone them fool Injuns!" said Bill, disgustedly — no one had spoken for several miles, which fact indicated that the others thought the situation serious — "why couldn't they hev put off their fambly quarrels till th' kids got home! Th' fact thet th' kids hed nuthin' t' do with th' argument won't help 'em none, mebbe, 'f they git into th' midst of it!"

"How d' yo' know th' kids ain't got nuthin' t' do with it?" asked Walker, after a moment. "Fur's I'm concerened, I'm prepared t' b'leeve thet mebbe th' kids is at th' bottom o' th' hull shootin'-match!"

"Knowin' them boys as I do," said Bassett, "I wouldn't put it past 'em! They didn't start nuthin' over t' th' Cross an' Circle, did they? Not *much!* An' 'tain't out o' reason thet they started somethin' over here."

"Wal," chimed in Buck Higgins, grinning, "it's a cinch ef the's any doin's bein' did, them boys ain't spectators, even ef they didn't *start*

th' rookus. 'F yo' all don't think them two has got some kind of a hand into it yo' kin win a bet from me!"

"Thet's th' way I want to bet," said Jordan, dryly. "Thet's jest whut I'm afeared of! Them two boys couldn't no more set by an' see a rookus come off 'thout takin' a hand than" — he paused for a moment — "than I could," he concluded. "I reck'n I oughta went with 'em, in th' first place — er let one o' yo' boys go. But I guess I was a leetle over-persuaded."

"Shucks!" said Walker. "When it's done, it's done, as th' Good Book says."

"'Twa'n't the Good Book, Walker, as said thet," said Jordan, reprovingly. "I'm s'prised t' hear yo' misquotin' her continual!"

"Well, who was it said it, then, perfess — seein' as yo' know it all?" asked Walker, sarcastically, and plainly unconvinced.

"It was one o' them play-actin' men said it," explained Bill. "I heared 'im say it when I was back t' Omaha onc't with some cattle. I seen thet Mac Beth feller with th' long hair an' fish-scale pants at a show, an' I heared 'im say ef it

was done it was best t' do it in a hurry. He was goin' t' kill some feller, but I didn't wait t' see 'im do it. Only hed two hours an' I wanted t' see ev'ry show in town."

"I got five thet says yo're wrong, Bill," said Bassett.

"Yeah, an' I got ten thet speaks th' same language," said Walker.

"I'll take half o' Walker's bet," put in Buck Higgins. "I had a old aunt thet c'd give yo' chapter an' verse — 'f she was here! She knowed th' hull Book backwards! Only she's cashed in."

"Wal," said Bill, weakening a little, "I reck'n thet's th' way yo' all knows it. But mebbe yo're right. 'T any rate, I ain't goin' t' make no bet — 'tain't no fit thing t' gamble on. We ain't got no way o' provin' it, anyhow."

With this argument settled, and the adage consigned to the "Good Book" by a majority vote, the four men rode and rode into the west.

And when Night had let down her curtain, they had covered more than sixty miles.

CHAPTER XVII

PEDRO'S ESCAPE

After the trouble and expense to which the state and county had been subjected on account of Pedro, it would seem that, once having him securely behind the bars, tried and convicted and awaiting sentence for murder, the officials would have seen to it that the man did not escape. But such was not the case. True, extraordinary precautions were taken, but against a man of Pedro's resourcefulness, they were of no avail. It is probable, too, that even those put in charge of him did not realize the depths to which the man was capable of sinking, and that there was nothing human about him, any more than there is about a mad dog. There was not the slightest particle of gratitude in his nature, and those who sought to befriend him or better his condition were no different from any one else, in Pedro's eyes. He would literally "bite the hand that fed him!"

In our prison system even the convicted mur-

derer has some rights and is allowed certain privileges, especially in the way of the preparing of his soul to meet his Maker. The consolation of religion is denied to no man who stands in the shadow of the gallows. And Pedro took advantage of this fact to make his escape.

During the forty-eight hours that followed his conviction and before sentence had been pronounced, Pedro gave every evidence of deep sorrow for his many crimes, and asked that a priest might come to him to receive his confession and to guide him in his prayerful repentance to God. No warden is going to deny a man this. But the thing to have done would have been to throw such safeguards about the interview as would have prevented such a meeting being the cloak for an ulterior purpose. In addition to this, Pedro had supposedly suffered a collapse, and was unable to leave his bed in the cell.

The good priest came, *and he was left alone with Pedro in his cell.*

"I wasn't goin' to butt in on no such occasion as thet!" explained the warden, with wrathful bitterness, afterward. "I set thar, right at the

end o' th' corridor, not more'n forty feet away, an' waited fer th' priest t' come out. I reckon, mebbe, he might 'a' bin in thar half an hour, an' I c'd hear Pedro mumblin' an' whinin', an' thought I c'd hear th' priest prayin'! Bimeby, not hearin' nuthin', I went t' th' door o' th' cell, an' thar was th' priest ready t' come out an' Pedro layin' on the bed some covered up. I lets th' priest out, an' he seemed t' be some affected an' was sort o' sniffin' an' holdin' his han'k'chief up to his eyes an' nose, an' his head sunk onto his breast.

"'Pretty tough case, ain't he?' I says t' th' Father.

"But he never made no answer — only jes' shook his head like he was kind o' givin' it up, an' seen he couldn't make much headway clearin' sech a skunk in th' sight o' th' Almighty — Pedro havin' pressed th' limit.

"'I guess,' I says, kind o' sympathizin' like, 'I wouldn't waste no time on him,' I says. 'Th' good Lord is right fergivin' an' all thet,' I says, 'but I reck'n yo're shore up against it tryin' t' pray this bird square with him! Th' price o'

coal is goin' up next winter,' I says, 'fer th' Devil 'll need all the' is when this here hombrey gits whar he b'longs — 'less'n th' other inmates puts up a holler 'bout admittin' Pedro int' th' place an' givin' it a bad name!'

"Y' see, I feels thet this here good man was takin' it t' heart thet he couldn't do nuthin' — th' job bein' out o' his class. An' I was jes' tryin' t' show him thet the' couldn't be *nuthin'* did by *nobuddy* fer a man like Pedro. Thet he was overplayin' his hand, as it were, an' I tried to comfort him a little fer fallin' down on th' job an' bitin' off more'n he c'd chew, an' mebbe gittin' *himself* in wrong by takin' up fer sech a critter in a dead-open-an'-shut case o' thumbs-down like his'n.

"An' I lets him out'n th' jail, feelin' sorry fer him; an' he goes off with his head down an' his han'k'chief over his face. Then, when it come time t' check up, mebbe a coupla hours later, we seen how it was! Th' priest lays on th' bed in th' cell, all covered up, an' a big cut on his head, whar Pedro hed thumped him. An' thet's 'bout all th' is to it — 'cept th' priest is goin' t' git

well, an' Pedro ain't bin ketched. Lost my job? Sure! what 'd y' expect? I'm pretty lucky 't I ain't in thar whar Pedro was!"

The fact that Pedro had made his escape from the jail in clerical garments rendered his escape from the town all the more easy. No one is likely to interfere with a priest, or to question his goings and comings, even though they may seem peculiar. As a matter of fact, Pedro induced a rancher to give him a lift behind him on his horse — the man suspecting nothing. And when they arrived at a suitable place, Pedro cracked the rancher over the head with the man's own revolver, which Pedro had slipped from the holster; and taking his horse, left the man to live or die in the road, and made for the mountains.

With two hours' start, and in such a country, it was a difficult matter to locate or even follow as slippery a man as Pedro. An organized search failed to uncover any trace of the man; and after a week or ten days of scouring the country, the baffled posse returned with not even "progress" to report. And when a posse can't even report

that — which is the same thing as saying, "We haven't done anything, but don't like to say so," you may be sure that the case looked hopeless.

Equipped with horse, six-gun, and such other things as the kindly rancher Samaritan possessed, even including his clothes, Pedro struck off toward the north for the mountains. He rode, day and night, never sparing his horse; and at the end of two days the latter dropped in his tracks. But as the outlaw had reached the foothills where the horse would be of little advantage to him, he abandoned the animal with not so much as a look back at the patient, willing thing that had brought him to comparative safety, and struck into the mountains with a good chance of getting over the Canada line.

He first visited the old cabin on the Island in Moose Lake where he had hidden when he escaped from the boys of the Bar O at the Cross and Circle ranch, and where he had been when Injun and Whitey had visited the island. It was in Moose Lake that Injun and Whitey had captured him; and Pedro felt that any extended

search would inevitably lead his pursuers to that place. He made his stay at the lake as brief as possible, on that account; and after a short rest and sleep, he struck off to the northwest into the mountains. After a time he managed to cross the ridge and descend into the valley beyond. In such a place it is not extremely difficult to live, even if a man has to depend entirely upon his own resources. We read, every now and then, of sturdy men who go into the wilds without even clothes to cover their bodies, and manage to come out hale and hearty after some thirty days or more. (I suppose the first thirty are the hardest! It's a good trick — if they can do it!) Pedro was not only clothed, but he had a six-gun and the ranchman's cartridge-belt and matches. So, comparatively speaking, Pedro was well equipped.

At any rate, he managed to get along for a time — long enough, in fact, to leave his curse upon that fair region. It seemed inevitable that disaster and evil should follow in the wake of the man, and that any person or anything that came within the influence of his presence should feel its malignance.

One day Pedro left his camp without stopping to stamp out the fire!

That was the same day that Injun and Whitey stood upon the high cliff and looked out over the valley.

When Injun said that maybe a "white man" had forgotten to stamp out his camp-fire, he knew what he was talking about — only Pedro was not what is ordinarily known as "a white man."

It was most unfortunate, too, on that occasion, that Pedro chose to go toward the north. Had he chosen to go southward, even a short distance into the region swept by the fire, he would inevitably have perished; and the demand for coal in the infernal regions might not have been so great as the warden supposed, because Pedro would have had a taste of what was coming to him even before he got there!

But no such luck! He went the other way — against the wind, instead of with it — and he sat and watched from a safe elevation the damage that his careless — yes, *criminal* act — had caused. If he thought anything about it at all,

he probably had a feeling of satisfaction! He was glad to do evil for Evil's sake — even when good would have been better for him!

But if Pedro escaped "the frying-pan," he also got into "the fire." The day that he took a couple of shots at Injun and Whitey as they crossed the ledge, his shots stirred up something. From the valley, among the trees below the ledge, he could not possibly have recognized the boys on account of the distance; nor, for the same reason, could he hope to shoot with any degree of accuracy. Even if he had deemed the boys to be his pursuers, it would have been better for him to have put as great a distance as possible between them and himself, for he must have known that he stood a very slight chance of hitting them, and that the shots would draw attention to him. But, no! He had to try to kill somebody!

Unfortunately — for him — however, there was quite a detachment of Dakota Indians abroad, under the leadership of John Big Moose, in connection with a little mining business; and the Indians proceeded to investigate the shots.

When Pedro saw them, he also made the mistake of shooting at them as he fled — though they had given him no reason to flee, and would not have molested him in any way. But, as in the case of Crowley, when a man begins shooting at you, the best plan is to shoot back, and do the investigating afterwards! And that is just what the Dakotas did.

And while Pedro managed to get away from the Indians, he not only used up the last of his few remaining cartridges, but got himself in bad with the only people in that entire region who would or could have helped him! Now, the hand of every man, red or white, was against him; and an empty six-gun isn't the best thing in the world with which to face the situation that surely lay before him!

He ducked and dodged and hid himself for a few days, afraid to go this way and afraid to go that, and really not knowing exactly where he was, anyhow; until, in order to escape from two Indians that he encountered over on the eastern slope of the mountain, he took refuge in a small cave or crack between the rocks,

the mouth of which was partially covered by brush.

The next thing Pedro knew, Whitey, with his hands tied behind him, was thrust into the cave with him! And you may be sure that Pedro, in the darkness of the cave, did not know that it was Whitey!

CHAPTER XVIII

INJUN'S NOBLE LOYALTY

THE great responsibility that had been placed upon Injun's shoulders by being made the go-between for the two factions weighed heavily upon the boy. He felt that upon what he did depended Whitey's fate, and he set out upon his mission with a determination to bring about some kind of a settlement.

It is not unlikely that he did not think about himself at all, although there could be no doubt that he was in a position of the greatest danger. He could not hope to reach the mine and John Big Moose unobserved by the Dakotas who acted as scouts and pickets, or those who kept guard about the mine itself.

Up the hill he went, his right hand upheld in salutation, and with no visible weapons upon his person. He had not, however, given up the knife that he had carried in his breast.

When he got within hailing distance of the little plateau upon which the mine was situated,

he hallooed, and then waited for an answer. Getting no response, he advanced a few yards, and then called again. Not until he had repeated this action again was there any evidence that he had been heard. As he was about to advance and call again, two of the Dakotas came from opposite sides of the woods, and assuring themselves that he was alone, they accompanied him in silence to the mine.

John Big Moose received Injun with an attitude that showed neither cordiality nor unfriendliness. But there was in John Big Moose's nature a certain something — a big, fine sense of justice which would not allow him to do a boy a wrong. Injun was a Dakota — one of his own race. Therefore, John Big Moose ordered the two Indians who had brought Injun to the mine to join the others while he spoke with the boy alone. He did not want to risk the chance of his braves' anger directed against the boy — one of their own people — if he brought a message which offended them. So John Big Moose spoke to Injun in the language of the white race.

Injun delivered the message as best he could.

The Crows had captured Whitey and himself and were holding them as hostage — he evidently regarded himself as out upon a parole which could not be broken, and in reality just as much a prisoner as Whitey. As the price of Whitey's release — Injun did not consider that he, himself, cut any figure in the offer — the Crows demanded the return of their horses and outfit, as well as a share in the mine. If this offer were rejected both he and Whitey would be killed, and the Crows would attack the Dakotas at the mine and fight it out to the bitter end.

John Big Moose had listened gravely to Injun's message, and when the boy had finished, he sat in silence for a few moments before speaking. "Why should I give up anything to save this white boy?" he asked, finally.

Injun did not reply, but waited for the chief to go on.

"Why should the Crows think I care anything about him? Do they think that because you two boys came to them to talk peace that you belong to us?"

"Me tell 'em not with you — they say me

lie!" replied Injun; and he went on to relate the happenings after they had left the mine — how they released Crowley and took sides against the Crows.

"But why should this be put up to me?" asked John. "What have I to do with it? The Crows attacked us and we beat them off. Later, we took their horses, and now they try to frighten me into giving them back — and a share in the mine, too — by threatening to kill you two boys! Don't they know that the white men will surely come and punish them for a murder like that? Don't they know that the punishment may include all the Indians in this country?"

"Get heap mad," explained Injun. "They say white man make you say yes. They say white man come, take 'way gol'-mine."

"The Crows said that for my benefit," said John, angrily. "They believed that you would tell me of it to save yourself and your friend! Well, it won't work!" he continued, hotly. "I will make no terms with them whatever! If they kill the white boy, they will have to take the blame! As for yourself," he added, looking at

Injun keenly, "you can save yourself now. I will give you your guns and you can make good your escape while they are waiting my answer."

Injun made no move to accept this offer; in fact, he seemed to deem it scarcely worthy of an answer at all, but at once entered into an earnest appeal that John Big Moose do *something* to save Whitey.

"Why should I?" asked John. "You boys interfered when you had no right to do so. You went to the Crows to talk, and when you were admitted to their camp, you took advantage of your position to free the man who is their enemy, and whom they had made a prisoner. If you were men you would be killed. It is only because you are boys that you are entitled to any sympathy at all."

"White man we let go save white boy's life, cattle rustlers want kill him at Cross Circle ranch," explained Injun, stout in his defense of Whitey.

"That all may be," said John, "but it has nothing to do with this case. And, anyway, why do you say 'we' — why didn't you let the white boy do it? What did you mix in for?"

Injun looked at John Big Moose almost contemptuously.

"White boy an' me friend," he said, simply, as though that settled everything — as indeed it did, as far as Injun was concerned.

"Well, even if that is the reason," argued John, who had a hard time in concealing his admiration for the boy before him, "I don't see why I should be asked — and the Dakotas should be asked — to pay for what you two boys did. Don't you see that it is unreasonable?"

"Dunno," replied Injun, stolidly; "mus' save him."

"What you say does you credit," said John, gravely, "but you must remember that I have our own people to deal with — to account to. What am I going to say to them if I surrender what I have already won and which belongs to them?"

"You chief," said Injun; "Dakota know chief big medicine man."

"That's just it!" answered John. "I'm chief because they think that I am wise! I'm afraid they wouldn't think me wise if I did such a thing as you ask me to do!"

Injun evidently felt that it was useless to pursue the matter further, and he started to turn away.

"Wait a moment!" said John. "Where are you going?"

Injun looked at John in surprise. "I go back Crows, tell 'em!" And in the boy's face was that which meant the decision that any other course was unthinkable.

"Didn't the Crows say that they would kill you, too?" asked John.

"Yes," answered Injun, simply, and in a tone which showed that he didn't see what that had to do with his going back.

"Why don't you take your gun and go the other way?" urged John, as he took the boy by the arm and looked into his eyes. "You can't do your friend any good by going back! And you'll only be making a useless sacrifice!"

"I go back," said Injun, quietly.

CHAPTER XIX

WHITEY FIGHTS PEDRO

To say that Whitey was startled when he recognized Pedro's voice in the darkness of the cave would not express it at all. But Whitey was not the kind of a boy that loses his head and becomes panicky in time of danger. He knew, of course, from Pedro's offer to untie his hands that the outlaw had not recognized him, and that as long as he could remain unknown to the man he would be safe enough, and might even get some assistance from him — as the offer to untie his hands indicated.

In accordance with Pedro's suggestion, Whitey turned over on his side with his back to Pedro, and in a moment or two he felt the tough thongs slip from his hands and they were free. He knew, also — and the knowledge was a considerable comfort — that Pedro had no knife, or he would not have gone to the trouble of untying the knot, but would have cut it.

He felt that, man to man, he would have an

excellent chance with Pedro if it came to a fight; for the man was but a trifle taller than Whitey, and the boy believed that he had the advantage of considerable science in both wrestling and boxing. Added to this was that great advantage which clean living brings to one who has practiced it, over an opponent who has spent his life in dissipation.

These and a thousand other thoughts went through Whitey's mind with incredible rapidity; and for a moment he lay still trying to formulate a course of action. He was inclined for a moment to turn upon Pedro and try to throttle him right there; but he dismissed this, not knowing to a certainty that Pedro was entirely resourceless in the way of weapons. If the man *should* happen to have a revolver about him, things would be a trifle awkward. He therefore edged a little away from Pedro, and determined to let events take their course and to shape his action accordingly; not forgetting, however, to keep the sharpest of watches upon the renegade beside him, both with eyes and ears.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Pedro

was looking out for nobody else in the world but Pedro; and on that account he was very chary about carrying on much of a conversation, as Indians have sharp ears, and even a whisper might betray his presence, which was as yet unsuspected by the two Indians who kept guard at the mouth of the hole. This exactly suited Whitey; for while he did not believe Pedro would recognize his voice if he disguised it and spoke in a whisper, yet there was a chance; and he preferred to take Pedro unawares, when it came down to a fight, rather than to have Pedro have that advantage.

When it seemed to Whitey that he had been in the cave for hours, but in reality not more than fifteen or twenty minutes, he crawled a little toward the mouth, keeping his face and profile well concealed from Pedro's gaze, and endeavored to observe the guards. He felt that there was little chance of being recognized by Pedro, for even at the mouth of the hole the light was very dim, and he would be in silhouette.

Whitey found that the guards were still there, seated on the ledge at some distance from the

opening, and in such a position that any surprise attack from him would be futile. Their rifles lay across their knees, and there was no opportunity, to secure one of the guns or any other weapon. In the hole, however, Whitey had sat, more or less painfully, upon a round stone, perhaps three inches in diameter, and this he clutched in his hand, feeling that it might be available in case of a fight with Pedro, or even with one of the guards should he be left alone on duty. There seemed little likelihood of this, however, for the two Indians had settled down as though they expected a long wait. The low roof of the cave made throwing the stone difficult, as Whitey found by getting on his feet; but he figured that he might be able to pull aside the bushes that covered the hole, and stepping out quickly, could, perhaps, bowl over one of the Indians before he would have a chance to shoot. This was a desperate chance, but in a situation like this, it is well to calculate *all* the chances.

As Whitey watched, his face close to the bush at the mouth of the hole, he heard the sound of firing at a distance. The guards also heard it,

and rose to their feet and listened. Again the firing was repeated and continued — not in volleys, but here and there and at irregular intervals. It seemed to Whitey that there could be but one cause for this — the two bands of Indians had come together and were fighting it out. This also seemed to be the opinion of the guards; for after a short consultation, one of them hurried away in the direction of the firing, and the other Indian stood looking after his departing comrade and listening to the firing. Now was Whitey's chance! If he were looking for an opportunity to get away from his captors he would never have a more favorable one!

In his eagerness to take advantage of the situation — the remaining Indian was not paying the slightest attention to the cave — Whitey almost made the mistake of throwing the rock before the departing Indian was out of sight or sound of what went on at the ledge. But the boy caught himself in time, and restrained his impulse to "bean" the Indian at once. Here was where a little baseball practice would come in handy!

When it seemed to Whitey that the departing Indian must be far enough away, Whitey braced himself for the ordeal. He crouched in the mouth of the hole and drew the bushes aside cautiously and noiselessly. Stepping out clear of the low roof, he drew back his hand with the heavy rock in it. The Indian stood near the edge of the ledge, almost with his back toward Whitey and all unconscious of his peril. Something must have warned him of his danger, however, for he started to turn toward the cave; but he was just too late! Whitey let the rock fly with all the strength that his pitching-arm contained, and it struck the Indian on the jaw just in front of his ear. Without a sound the Indian crumpled and fell over the side of the ledge and rolled and tumbled and slid to the rocks, fifty feet below!

So excited was Whitey over the success of his maneuver that, for a second or two, he forgot all about Pedro; but he was brought to a realization that his fight was but half won when he heard a voice from the mouth of the hole cry, "Da's ver' good shot!" and turning quickly he stood face to face with the outlaw!

When Whitey had thrown the rock he had stood with his back toward Pedro, and the latter had not recognized him; but now they stood confronting each other, and there could be no doubt about identities.

The startled look that first came upon Pedro's face gave way to one of fiendish joy and satisfaction. This was too much luck! Here he stood, not only delivered from the pursuing Indians, but with the object of his hatred right in his grasp! And leering like a hyena Pedro started to advance craftily and with devilish deliberation upon the boy. But Pedro was destined to get the surprise of his life!

"Ah ha!" snarled Pedro, his face cracking open in a wicked grin and his little eyes narrowed to slits, "here ees ma yo'ng fr'en' zat geeve Pedro nize ride to ze ranch! Ma yo'ng fr'en' zat tak' my peekshur'! Yo' hav' planty fun wiz Pedro — yaas? Now Pedro go'n' hav' planty fun wiz yo'! Ain' no wan go'n' tak' yo' peekshur' whan Pedro gets th'o wiz yo'!"

Whatever of advantage there was in position, Pedro had. At his back was the wall of solid

rock, and behind Whitey was the almost sheer drop of the fifty-foot cliff. If Pedro rushed him the momentum would be apt to topple Whitey over the edge in the same manner that the Indian had fallen, but Whitey made up his mind that if he went over, Pedro would go, too! The advantage of weight, too, was with Pedro, although he outweighed the boy not more than fifteen pounds. In the matter of quickness Whitey far outclassed his opponent — he was satisfied of that; but whether he also excelled in science remained to be seen. Whitey knew that some of the ex-lumber-jacks from the Canada woods, of whom Pedro was one, were skilled in wrestling and rough-and-tumble fighting, but very few of them knew much of real boxing. Their idea of boxing was simply to sail in and wallop away until one or the other fell. If this turned out to be Pedro's method, Whitey felt that he had, at least, an even break. He would avoid clinching, and pepper his man with the "hit-and-get-away."

With these things in his mind Whitey *advanced* to meet the man! The lust of battle was

in his veins, and there was no fear in his face or in his heart. Rather, he welcomed the trial!

"Oh, you're going to have 'planty fun wiz me,' huh?" taunted Whitey. "Well, come on! I'll give you all the fun you want! And when I've knocked your block off, I'm going to take you back to jail again! What do you know about that? Maybe I can get another thousand dollars for that! Did you know that they paid Injun and me a thousand dollars each for bringing you in before? That's a pretty high price for dog-meat, too, isn't it!"

The moment that a man loses his temper in a boxing bout — or in almost any other kind of competition, for that matter — he is at a disadvantage. The phrase, "blind fury," means exactly what it says. A man who is furious not only loses control of himself so that he cannot do his best, but he also is blind to opportunities which he would otherwise see and embrace. It was with this in mind that Whitey taunted Pedro as he did.

And it worked. The man was not only astonished and enraged at the assurance of this boy

THE LUST OF BATTLE WAS IN HIS VEINS

who defied him and actually advanced to meet him with all the confidence in the world in his face and manner, but he was infuriated to think that his two most hated enemies had profited by his misfortune. He would seize this upstart and wring his neck for him! And he rushed at Whitey swinging his arms like flails.

But, unfortunately for Pedro, he did not hit anything more solid than the air; and with his guard open, Whitey poked a straight left into Pedro's face, and followed it with another and another, before the man could get his bearings. Pedro's nose took on a rosy hue, and he sniffed and wiped away a trickle of blood with his sleeve.

"That's one they didn't show you!" taunted Whitey. "I've got a few more here that you read about — that is, if you *can* read, which I don't suppose you can! *I know* you can't when I get through decorating that other eye for you!"

Pedro let out a bellow of rage and a volley of oaths, shut his eyes, and made a rush at Whitey like a mad bull. This time Whitey's back was against the wall of rock — he had maneuvered Pedro around with his back to the edge of the

ledge — and when Whitey side-stepped and ducked, Pedro crashed into the wall and landed a solid thump upon it that nearly broke his arm and badly lacerated his knuckles. He bumped back from the rock, in a half-dazed way, but was still swinging wildly. When he opened his eyes, he saw Whitey standing ten feet away from him, his arms at his sides, and laughing heartily.

"What's the matter, old Timer?" asked the laughing Whitey. "Here I am, over here! That was sure a haymaker you landed on that rock!"

Pedro had gathered himself together and seemed to have determined that these blind rushes weren't going to get him anything, and he started to edge toward Whitey in a manner that is known as "crowding." But Whitey knew just how to handle a "crowder" — at any rate, such a crowder as Pedro.

"Look out!" shouted Whitey, pointing. "Back of you!"

And the foolish Pedro, taken by surprise, turned his head to look back of him for just one quarter of a second! And Whitey, putting

about all he had into a right swing, knocked him flat!

Had the punch landed on the right spot, it would probably have ended the fight; but it was a trifle high; and while Pedro went down hard enough, he was by no means out. Aside from Whitey's natural disinclination to hit even so despicable a thing as Pedro when he was down, Whitey did not feel that the time had yet come when it would be safe to grapple with the man; and Pedro staggered to his feet. Of course, Whitey was all over him, jabbing and hooking wherever he saw an opening, but had no chance to land another haymaker. Pedro was "dogging it," after the manner of the most arrant quitter, and kept his arms folded in front of his face; and the crouch that he assumed prevented Whitey from landing effectively on his stomach. One or two snappy upper-cuts sufficed to straighten him up, however; and then, baffled and beaten at every turn, his face a mass of cuts and bruises, with a nose like a ripe tomato, both of his eyes discolored and rapidly closing, his wind gone, and his strength going fast, he stood

glaring at Whitey, the picture of desperation and defeat, his back against the wall of the rock.

"You're having 'planty fun,' ain't you, Pedro?" taunted Whitey, jabbing the sore nose two or three times, and maneuvering for an opening. "You'd *like* to quit, wouldn't you? But you *can't!* That's a tough fix for a coward and a bully — to want to quit and can't! After I hit you a couple more, I'm going to take you back to jail! But I guess you'll have to have your picture taken first! I wish you could see yourself! You're a fine-looking —"

Pedro shut his eyes and put everything that he had left into a last desperate rush; but Whitey side-stepped, and Pedro went floundering by. There was nothing to stop him this time; and he blundered over the brink of the ledge! With a cry of rage and terror, he fell fifty feet to the rocks below.

Whitey went to the edge of the ledge and looked over. There was no reason for him to take Pedro back to jail now!

CHAPTER XX

THE REWARD OF BRAVERY

THE receding form of Injun, a pathetic figure, had scarcely been lost among the trees below the plateau of the mine, when John Big Moose and the Dakotas proceeded to get busy. John's heart had gone out to the boy in his loyalty to his friend, and if anybody supposed that Mr. Big Moose was going to sit idly by and let the Crows have a chance to perpetrate any such outrage as they had threatened, he was much mistaken. And before Injun was a hundred yards away from the mine, the gliding figures of the Dakotas trailed him through the thick forest.

It was not in the mind of John Big Moose that the boy should ever reach the camp of the Crows and run the risk, even for a moment, of being a sacrifice on the altar of his loyal friendship. While he had his doubts as to whether they would carry out the threat, as far as the white boy was concerned, he feared that Injun, con-

tributing to their defeat as he had, and returning from an unsuccessful mission, would fall a victim to their wrath. But what he *did* want was to know the exact location of the Crow camp, and he knew that this could be obtained in the manner which he was employing. Perhaps, too, he wanted to test the boy's fine sincerity. And when it became evident that they must be nearing the Crow camp, two of the braves stole up and seized the boy, and hustled him back to the rear of their company.

Injun protested to John Big Moose, vigorously.

The latter smiled. "You are much too good a boy to take any such chances with!" explained John. "And, besides, this isn't your fight." But he handed Injun the two guns belonging to him and Whitey.

"Me fight — for my friend!" said Injun, still protesting.

"You stay back here until the attack is made," said John, "and then you can come up in time to help save your friend."

But Injun would hear to nothing like this, and

he stole from tree to tree as the silent approach advanced.

Once the camp of the Crows was located, the Dakotas spread out in fan-shape, covering the uphill side; and in this formation they advanced stealthily, crawling upon the ground, and making no noise whatever, and exposing themselves as little as possible. In this way they contrived to get within easy range of the Crows before they were detected.

It is probable that this could not have happened had not the Crows been in a partially demoralized condition. They were by no means unanimous in regard to the course of action which they were taking, many of them wishing to abandon the ill-starred expedition, begun under the leadership of Crowley, and resulting in nothing, so far, but reverses and disappointments.

No resistance worthy of the name was made against the Dakotas, and after a few scattering shots had been fired at the attacking party, the Crows took to their heels and ran, with the Dakotas in pursuit.

Nor did the pursuit carry very far; little could

be gained by a wholesale slaughter of the band, and much might be lost by leaving the mine. The casualties had been few; three of the Crows were known to have been wounded, and one of the Dakotas had been winged; but the wounded Crows had been able to get away without much help from their own men. John Big Moose was satisfied that he need look for no further opposition from the Crows, and he was willing to let the matter rest where it was.

The only person who was distinctly dissatisfied was Injun. Whitey was nowhere to be found! Many of the Dakotas, John Big Moose among them, and Injun, himself, had had a clear view of the camp at the time of the attack, and were positive that Whitey had not been there at the time; and they were equally sure that he had not been carried away by the retreating Indians. Each of the fleeing Crows appeared to have enough to do to take care of himself and the three wounded men without bothering about Whitey. Whitey had certainly been left at the camp when Injun had started on his mission to John Big Moose, but he was not there now! And there

seemed to be but two alternatives — either he had escaped or he had been taken away by some of the band for safe-keeping. The former supposition was improbable, for when the Dakotas attacked, the Crows had been at the camp in a body, and this would not have been the case if Whitey had made an escape. They would certainly have been out in search of the ace which they intended to play.

The latter supposition seemed more probable; and under the orders of John Big Moose some six or seven of the Dakotas started off in different directions to scour the woods, the remaining men returning to the mine.

Injun tore around like a bird-dog, looking for some clue or track; and after a few moments he found the trail that had been left by Whitey and his two guards when they had started on their way to the cave, and together with John Big Moose started to follow it. Of course they could not be sure that this was Whitey's trail, for the footprints were not plain at that point, but it was certain that *somebody* had left the camp.

Owing to the nature of the ground the trail

was very difficult to follow; but the keen eyes of Injun, supplemented by those of John, who was no amateur in such matters, led them aright; and they had not gone more than two hundred yards before, in a soft spot in the ground, was revealed the fact that Whitey had made the trail. His somewhat smaller, white man's foot was plainly visible, with Indian feet on either side of it.

Once a tracker knows that he is on the *right* trail, much of the difficulty is avoided, and it is far easier to follow it speedily. Now Injun and John went ahead rapidly — almost as fast, in fact, as Whitey and the two guards had gone when they had made it.

At a certain place in the trail, as it led sharply around a high, sheer cliff, John Big Moose happened to be in the lead, with Injun some two or three paces behind him. As John rounded the cliff Injun heard a rough voice say:

"Put up yer hands, yo' big, red Piute! An' drop thet gun!"

Stopping still in his tracks, Injun saw John obey the order in a manner that showed he had no chance to do otherwise. Injun ducked off to the

side of the trail and hid behind a tree, gradually and noiselessly working his way to a point where he could get a view of what was going on. Soon he heard the calm tones of John's voice: "Well, now that I have done as you suggested, what else do you want me to do? And if it is all the same to you, I prefer not to be called a Piute — I am a Dakota."

Although Injun could not see it, he could feel the surprise that staggered the white man at hearing an Indian express himself in perfect English. For a second or two there was complete silence; then he heard the voice, which he recognized as that of Crowley, say, in astonished tones, "Sufferin' dictionaries! Why, yo' hostile, ab'riginal Piute! Whar did yo' learn t' talk United States? Am I plumb locoed er — Hol' on thar!"

And before Injun could get upon the scene in time to introduce the two men properly, it was evident that they had come to a clinch. John Big Moose, standing before Crowley, with his hands raised above his head, had taken advantage of Crowley's astonishment and had leaped

at him, knocking up his gun hand, so that as Crowley pulled the trigger of his six-shooter, it was discharged high in the air. And when Injun got to the scene the two big men were engaged in a rough-and-tumble that resembled somewhat the battle of the grizzlies.

Had Crowley been in perfect condition there would have been little to choose between them; but weakened as he was by the sprained ankle and by his long fast, he was no match for John Big Moose, and he was getting a mauling that must eventually make him succumb. John, too, had succeeded in getting out his hunting-knife, and though Crowley had seized his wrist and was holding off the blow that impended, it was plain to Injun that Crowley's strength was ebbing, and that the knife must inevitably end the struggle. And it was a most fortunate thing for Jim Crowley that the boy was at hand.

For a second or two Injun watched the struggle, fascinated. Within him there was a momentary flash of that hatred of the white race and love of his own that prompted him to come to the aid of his own blood and the annihilation

of the white. But instantly he put this away, and springing to the men, he also seized the wrist of John Big Moose and pulled it away when the keen knife was at the throat of Crowley.

"Him good man!" he shouted to John; and then, in the speech of the Dakotas, he hastily told that this was the man whom he and Whitey had released from the Crows, and who had saved Whitey's life at the Cross and Circle.

John Big Moose relaxed his hold, and Crowley got to his feet with difficulty.

"Kid," said he, looking at Injun, "thet's th' second time to-day yo' done me a good turn! 'Pears t' me I'm some in yo'r debt! I reckon 'f 'twasn't fer yo', this here walkin' grammar'd 'a' croaked me proper."

"'This here walkin' grammar' will do it yet if you don't use a little more care in your speech!" said John Big Moose, in a tone that indicated he would do what he said.

"I reck'n yo' would, at that," said Crowley, grimly. "But not ef yo'r high-falutin' talk hadn't jest about paralyzed my think-box an' made my gun hand slow. Seein' as yo're some

partic'ler 'bout how yo're t' be addressed, whut's yo'r handle so's I won't be rilin' yo'r majesty none?"

"Never mind my name!" said John, with some heat, and an ugly look on his face; "I'll take good care that you don't 'rile' me by tying your hands and putting a gag in that uncivil mouth of yours," and he started to put his threat in execution.

"Him good man!" said Injun, by way of protest. "Him friend."

"He doesn't act much like a friend to me!" said John; but he stopped in his preparations for binding and gagging Crowley, and looked at the man appraisingly.

Crowley grinned. "Chief," he said, "er Rain-in-the-Face, er Settin' Bull, er Standin' Cow, er whatever th' handle yo' claims to be yo'r'n is, I'm gittin' sick o' bein' rescued by this here kid. Yo' kin go as fur as yo' like with thet bindin' an' gaggin' thing, er anythin' else yo' sees fit t' do! Yo' got th' aige on me, an' I ain't puttin' up no holler an' I ain't askin' fer no favors — not off'n no grammertistical Piute, I ain't — thankin' th'

kid jes' th' same — him havin' good intentions."

"Him no Piute," said Injun. "Him Dakota — him name John Big Moose. Him friend, too!"

"I'm 'bliged t' meet yuh, Mr. Moose," said Crowley, "only I ain't none too stuck on th' circumstances o' th' interduction. 'F yo're a friend o' this here kid an' thet pal o' his'n, mebbe yo're better 'n yo' look to me. An' ef so be, mebbe I spoke some hasty an' out'n my turn, an' I withdraws them remarks — not lookin' fer no favors, er nuthin' like thet, but on account o' yo'r bein' a friend o' the kids. Which I'm proud t' say I am, myself. My name's Crowley."

"I'm glad to meet you, too, Mr. Crowley," said John, with a faint smile. "But I rather think we've met before. Aren't you the gentleman that took a few pot-shots at us when we came to the mine without waiting to see what we wanted — whether we were friendly or not?"

"I reck'n a gent has got a right t' defend his own prop—" Crowley began, but Injun interrupted by saying that they had started out to find Whitey and were delaying the main business in hand. As soon as Crowley understood the

situation he immediately put aside everything personal and offered to join in the search.

"Any little matters thet me an' yo' has to settle, Mr. Moose, I reck'n kin wait a spell till we find this here kid," said Crowley. "Not as I'm much afraid harm'll come t' him, havin' saw him perform before. But mebbe 'f yo' values them braves thet yo' is chief of, yo' better see to it thet this here ragin' catamount don't git hooked up with 'em! He's liable t' treat 'em rough! 'Tain't safe fer him t' be at large!"

John Big Moose was a good judge of men, and he could not doubt the evident sincerity of the man; and as John was now indisputably in control of the situation, he could afford to be generous. And so Crowley was added to their division of the searching party; and they lost no time in pursuing the trail which led straight to the ledge upon which Whitey had won his freedom but a short time before.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RESCUE PARTY

On the second day following their departure from the ranch, Bill Jordan and his party came upon the little clump of woods where Injun and Whitey had camped on their arrival, and from which they had started to trail the passing band of Crows toward the mine. A whinny from Whitey's horse, Monty, attracted their attention, although the men would undoubtedly have gone into the clump had the horse not whinnied.

"Here's their hosses!" shouted Walker, in a relieved way, he being in the lead. "But where in Sam Hill are the kids?"

Jordan and the rest dismounted and examined the place, and could readily see that the camp had been recently occupied. But where were the boys?

"They cain't be fur off," said Higgins. "It don't seem reasonable 't they'd go 'way an' leave all this here truck an' them hosses fer long."

"I dunno," said Jordan, meditatively. "By

th' looks o' things they ain't bin here sence yestiddy, er mebbe longer 'n thet. I dunno's I jes' like th' looks of it."

"Yo' said it, Bill!" agreed Walker. "The' 's somethin' keepin' 'em. Them boys wouldn't go 'way an' stay like they've done 'less the' 's somethin' doin'!"

"Yo' all is a lot o' ol' wimmen!" scoffed Higgins. "What kin be doin'?"

"I thought yo' said, Buck, thet yo' was acquainted with them two?" said Jordan, pityingly. "Ef you was, yo' wouldn't never ask no fool question like thet! 'What kin be doin'!' With them two? Jes' adzackly nine thousand different things! It are up t' us t' find out which pertic'ler one o' th' nine thousand it is!"

"Wal," said Bassett, "'tain't gittin' us nuthin' standin' here an' guessin' er waitin' fer 'em t' come back. I don't know but mebbe one of us better stay here, tho'; ef they should come an' we missed 'em on th' way, we'd put in a lot o' time fer nuthin'."

"All right," said Walker, "then you stay."

"Who? Me?" said Bassett, indignantly.

"Where do you git thet stuff? I'm a-goin'! We kin leave a note here, givin' our address an' sayin' we'll call ag'in er somethin'. I'm too young t' be left here alone, anyhow! 'F somebuddy's gotta stay, let Bill do it — er Buck — er you."

It was perfectly evident that nobody wanted to be assigned to "fixed-post" duty, and so Bill wrote a note which he affixed to one of the saddles, telling that the relief expedition had arrived, and that the boys were to wait until it returned to the camp. This done, they set out up the mountain on their horses, being unwilling to leave them with the others at the camp, although they might have made more speed on foot.

Halfway up, the men saw the effects of the forest fire, and Jordan's face looked longer than ever. They realized that the situation might indeed be serious, although the fact that the boys had been in camp but a day before proved conclusively that they had escaped the fire which had burned weeks before. Many things might happen in the wake of a forest fire that would be unpleasant. But it offered one advantage; it

was scarcely likely that the boys would have gone into the burned district, and thus the scope of their search was shortened. They must be on the eastern slope and toward the north. And in that direction they rode, gradually descending the ridge until they took nearly the same trail that the boys and the Crows had followed, but spread out in such a manner that they covered almost all possible avenues of travel.

At various points they came upon the evidences of recent travel, although there could be no doubt that there had been horses in the party that had made it. As the boys' horses were at the camp, it was unlikely that the boys would have been of this party unless they had been taken into it against their will. At intervals they fired their guns in the air and hallooed; but got no answering call.

The farther they went, the more puzzling the situation became; and to complicate matters further, on two occasions they had seen one or more Indians. But all attempts to get near them failed. They were members of the unlucky Crows and they were anxious to get home as soon

as possible. Walker and Bassett gave chase to the fleeing red men, but came back without being able to get into touch. The fact that there was a rumpus on among the two tribes did not serve to relieve Jordan's apprehensions.

It would be idle to follow in detail the course of the rescue party. Suffice it that, after some hours of riding, they came around under the base of a sheer, fifty-foot cliff, and there before them upon the rocks lay the body of Pedro!

"Well, what do you know about this!" exclaimed Walker, who got to him first, and, in spite of the bruised features of the man, recognized him. "Thet skunk is gone to his reward! 'F them boys never done nuthin' else, they oughta git a medal fer this!"

The men gathered around the body and made certain the identification.

Walker could not restrain his delight at finding the man: "Of all th' low-down houn's an' no-account —"

"Ssssh!" said Bill, reprovingly. "'Tain't fer yo' t' set up t' jedge no man after he's done cashed in! Whut's interestin' me is, how come

all this here? 'Pears like thet bird done fell off'n th' clift."

"He never got thet face fallin' off'n no clift," said Bassett. "He was done beat-up 'fore he did th' fallin'. I never seen no guy look like thet 'thout he got a hand-made lickin'. Now," continued Bassett, oracularly, "who done it? Them Injuns ain't none gifted at boxin' — th' manly art o' mussin' up a guy like thet ain't learnt in their schools — 'less'n 'tis at Carlisle. Th' person that scrambled this gent's features like you see were nobuddy but Whitey!"

"Whut makes yo' think a kid like Whitey c'd put it all over a growed man like this here Pedro?" asked Buck Higgins.

"My reasons consist o' several o' them same kind o' bumps thet he plastered onto me th' las' time me an' him put on th' gloves," said Bassett. "I don't reck'n this here Pedro would be more'n a mouthful fer me, an' I'll say thet kid made me step some! He's scienced, an' quicker'n a cat, an' he packs a consider'ble wallop in each hand. Looks like him an' Pedro come together up onto thet ledge, an' th' kid knocked him off."

"He's took th' count, all right," said Walker, with intense satisfaction in his tone. "I reck'n th' referee — 'f th' was one — could count mebbe sever'l million over him 'thout his gittin' up! Th' other guy gits th' decision — whoever he was. He wins th' cards, chips, money, an' th' watch! An' I reck'n yo' said somethin' when yo' 'lowed as how Whitey done it."

"Whoever did it, it's did," said Jordan. "Let's go up t' th' ledge an' see whut we kin find."

As they were about to start, an Indian, dazed and bewildered, staggered unsteadily to his feet and looked blankly at them. Only a glance was necessary to convince any one that his countenance was also somewhat disarranged.

The men grabbed him before he had a chance to take a step.

"Sufferin' Corbett!" said Bassett. "This here must 'a' bin a battle-royal! Ain't thet kid a cuckoo? I'd 'a' giv' a year's pay t' seen —" But further observations upon Whitey's prowess were cut short by the questioning that Jordan was giving the soreheaded Indian.

"How come?" asked Jordan, shaking the Indian violently to get his scattered wits together. "Who knocked yo' down th' clift?"

"Him boy," said the Indian, feeling of his head.

"What did I tell yo' all!" yelled Bassett. "Didn't I tell yo' 'twa'n't nobuddy but Whitey? Ain't he a lulu?"

"Whar's th' boy now?" asked Jordan, shaking the Indian again.

"Dunno," said the Indian, stupidly, and evidently not caring a great deal about anything except the pain in his head.

"Wal, yo' better know!" said Jordan. "Jes' come along with us, an' we'll try t' refresh yo'r mem'ry a little 'bout how come all this."

With the Indian in custody Jordan and the other men made their way to the ledge where the struggle between Whitey and Pedro had taken place, but beyond the discovery of the cave in which they had been hidden, little or nothing could be learned from the visit. The Indian was sharply questioned again, and the information was extracted from him about Whitey's capture

and the mission upon which Injun had been sent; but as to the result of the mission the Indian could, of course, shed no light. He was rapidly recovering his wits, but the blow that Whitey had given him with the stone had been a severe one, and he had been unconscious for more than an hour. It was miraculous that he had not been killed by the fall, although it was perhaps due to his limp condition that he had not been more seriously injured. The fall had not been a sheer one, for the cliff was not quite perpendicular; and he had crumpled and collapsed and then rolled and bounded and slid a good portion of the way; and had brought up in a clear space. On the other hand, Pedro, who was not seriously injured when he went over the edge, had plunged out farther than the Indian from the force of his rush at Whitey, and he had made almost a straight fall. In addition to this, he had, on landing, crashed against a boulder, with fatal results.

When it was obvious that nothing of advantage could be obtained from the Indian by further questioning, he was made to understand

that his fate would depend entirely upon whether Whitey was found and found quickly; and he was ordered to conduct the party to the place from which he had started with the boy. And in that direction under the Indian's guidance the party set out.

They had proceeded but a short distance when Walker sighted the other searching party — Injun, John Big Moose, and Crowley — although the distance and the thickness of the trees made it impossible to identify any of them.

"Look ahead, Bill!" exclaimed Walker. "Here come somebuddy — looks like a white man and a couple o' Injuns, but the' may be more of 'em. Better cover up till we find out."

Each one of the party ducked behind the nearest rock or tree, Jordan dragging the Indian with him; but it was only a few seconds after that Jordan set up a yell and dashed out toward the oncoming party.

"It's Injun!" shouted Jordan. "I'd 'a' known him a mile 'f I'd got a good look at 'im 'fore I ducked!"

"Yes, an' 'f I got my eyesight, there's thet big hombrey Bill let go over t' th' Cross an' Circle!" said Walker to Bassett and Higgins, as they followed. "We might 'a' known he'd be mixed up inta this when we come acrost Pedro! Them bad eggs has a way o' flockin' together, as th' Good Book says — 'cordin' to Jordan."

"Will yo' look at th' size o' thet red-bird thet's trailin' 'long with 'em?" said Buck Higgins, indicating John Big Moose. "He's 'bout four sizes an' a half bigger 'n Bill! An' Bill ain't no dwarft!"

"Yes, an' I got his number, too!" said Walker. "'F I ain't mistook, thet there's John Big Moose. He's full o' eddication an' uplift an' welfare an' such. He's a Dakota thet they tried t' civ'lize — sent 'im East t' college an' all thet. I hear he's a bear when it comes t' literachoor an' football an' them other college sports. Comes home on vacations an' sets in th' game with his tribe, him not bein' entirely house-broke yet. I heard it said 't he kin follow suit in 'most any kind o' languages — foreign er domestic an' them they quit usin'. 'Cordin' t' reports he are a pippin!"

"He looks it!" said Bassett, as they neared the group which Bill had already joined.

If Bill and the ranchmen were glad to see Injun, it is safe to say that Injun was equally glad to see them; and the greetings exchanged between these usually undemonstrative people were more than cordial. The one fly in the ointment was, of course, the absence of Whitey. Piece by piece — from Injun, Crowley, and John Big Moose — Bill gathered the story and put the various parts together. How Whitey tried to settle the fight between the Dakotas and the Crows, his unsuccessful mission, the finding and liberating of Crowley, the fight of the bears, their capture by the Crows, and the mysterious disappearance of the boy while Injun was sent on the mission to John Big Moose. The captured Indian whom Whitey had bowled over the cliff had filled the gap up to the time that the rock had hit him, but from that time on there was nothing known, and the present whereabouts of the boy and what had taken place after he had left the ledge were matters of guesswork only.

Night was beginning to settle down, and it was obviously unwise to spend much time in surmising.

"Th' thing to do," said Bill, "is to look fer 'im. Don't seem like he kin be very far off, seein' as Mr. Moose, here, says 'tain't more 'n a hour sence him an' his band done run th' Crows out'n th' woods. Th' fact thet he don't answer t' no shootin' an' hallooin' makes me think mebbe somethin's happened to 'im."

"It isn't strange that he doesn't respond to shots that are fired," said John Big Moose, "for there was a good deal of that sort of thing going on all day, and he may think — provided he heard them — that the fight is still on. And he may be out of earshot of the shouts."

"Can y' beat it!" whispered Walker to Bassett, nudging him violently. "Didn't I tell yo' thet this bird was ther with the Webster?"

"Yo' done said it!" agreed Bassett.

"There are some eight or ten of my men searching for him now," continued John, "and I would make the suggestion that we spread out in parties of two. As soon as the boy is found return

to the mine with him, as that is the most available meeting-place."

"I pass!" said Bassett, helplessly, in a low tone to Walker and Buck Higgins. "He's got me faded!"

"Speakin' o' cuss-words," put in Walker, "thet guy could cuss a man out proper 'thout him knowin' whut was comin' off."

The searchers were soon divided into parties of two, one of each pair being familiar with the location of the mine, and it fell to the lot of Crowley to accompany Bill Jordan. As they strode through the brush and trees, taking a northerly and uphill direction, and examining every foot of the ground, Bill asked, "What 'bout this here mine thet this Moose person is mentionin' frequent? I didn't quite git specifications of 'er."

"'Cordin' t' my lights," said Crowley, "I'm th' sole an' lawful owner an' properieter of 'er. When I run acrost 'er, she were abandoned — hadn't bin no work did on 'er in a consider'ble spell. I gits busy an' I washes out some coupla hunderd bucks' wo'th o' color in two days.

Then 'long comes this here grammertistical Piute, sheddin' parts o' speech all over th' place, an' 'bout fifteen more o' his kind aidin' an' abettin' him, an' starts t' jump th' claim. I jes' nacher'ly plugs a couple of 'em, but they was too strong fer me, an' I beat it, leavin' some o' my hide an' a few drops o' my blood onto th' prop'ty."

"Humph!" mused Jordan. "'Tain't like a Injun t' jump claims."

"They shore jumped this 'un, all right," said Crowley, grimly. "An' I bein' some het up goes an' gets a bunch o' them Crows, they calls 'emselves, but I reck'n they's all Piutes, an' I manages t' secure 'bout ten gallon o' booze — reel ol' third rail, fightin' whiskey — an' I enlists 'em under my banner, an' we sets out t' re-take th' place — me bein' some liberal with promises an' whiskey. 'T seems like I done got in Dutch when I hands one of 'em a kick in the pants, an' th' fust thing I knowed they had me roped t' a tree; an' I reck'n 'f them boys hadn't come along, 'bout as they did, I'd 'a' bin th' most principal thing at a barbecue."

"Yo' bin havin' dealin's with them Southern Injuns," said Bill. "These here ones is more high-strung like. 'Tain't safe t' kick none of 'em. But yo' say yo' washed out a coupla hunderd in two days at this here mine?"

"I shore did," said Crowley. "Mebbe more."

"Humph!" said Jordan, after a pause. "That there mine is a matter thet mebbe oughta be investigated. Seems like mebbe yo' got some claim."

"I shore am goin' t' do a little investigatin'," said Crowley. "Mebbe more 'n thet. An' seein' as how our fust pardnership turned out fair to middlin' — fur's th' money's concerned, anyhow — I was thinkin' mebbe I'd declar' yo' in on this here deal, me bein' some in yo'r debt 'count of thet time at ol' man Ross's ranch."

"I ain't lookin' fer no comeback 'count o' whut I done thet time," said Bill, "but I dunno but I c'd mebbe earn a little sal'ry straightenin' out th' mess. 'F yo' say so, I'm in on the deal fer whut's fair. I bin wantin' a good gold-mine fer some time. I c'n use it! But 'tain't goin' t' be no cinch gittin' shet o' this here Moose person.

He's got all th' appearances o' bein' some wise fish. Time 'nuff t' talk when we find th' kid." And Jordan pulled himself together as though he were violating his duty by discussing even the ownership of a gold-mine when Whitey was still unfound.

The finding of Whitey proved no easy job. As the hours wore on and no trace of him could be found, the searchers began to worry. All through the night they beat the bush of the mountain for many miles around, but there was no answering call to their halloos. And toward morning the varous parties came trooping in, singly and in pairs, to the little plateau where the mine was situated. And the look upon their long faces made it unnecessary to ask any questions.

As they took stock of their various activities, it became certain that there was no foot of the territory within the distance that Whitey could have gone that had not been examined. Every possible place where a rabbit could have hidden had been investigated, and at every point where disaster or accident could have overtaken him an examination had been made.

"I can't understand it," said John Big Moose, after a long pause, in which no one had spoken. "I will never leave the spot until this thing is solved. The earth can't have opened and swallowed him up. Even if he is dead there must be some trace of him, and it is up to us to find it. When it becomes light we had better start out with a more systematic plan."

Needless to say, this expression of determination and declaration of loyalty to Whitey did not fail to impress the ranchers favorably. "The grammertistical Piute" wasn't such a bad fellow, after all, and he could have burst into epic blank-verse without exciting any derision from Bassett or Walker or Buck Higgins.

As the men sat about the fire, with heads dropped upon their breasts, a loud yell from Injun startled them almost into fits. Out of the tunnel of the mine, yawning and stretching and rubbing his eyes, crawled Whitey, and stood, for a moment, gazing blankly at them in the flickering firelight.

CHAPTER XXII

WHITEY'S SURPRISE

"SUFFERIN' Rip Van Winkles!" shouted the astonished and delighted Bill Jordan as he recognized the boy. "Here we bin — 'bout a dozen er more able-bodied, full-growed men — a-skallyhootin' 'round this here mount'n all night, an' him layin' in a hole in th' ground like a rabbit in a burrow, an' safer 'n a church, gettin' a little much-needed rest! Come here, yo' r'arin' catamount, an' let's hev a look at ye!" And the men all gathered about the boy, slapping him on the back and pulling him this way and that in delight.

It was a second or two before Whitey could grasp the situation; but when he had rubbed the sleep from his eyes and the cobwebs had cleared from his brain, he gave vent to a whoop of joy at the sight of his old friends, and tried to answer the multitude of questions that Bill and Bassett and Walker and Crowley and the rest all asked at once.

"Tell us whut yo' done t' Pedro?" seemed to be the most frequent and insistent of the questions, a number of the men asking it at the same time.

"Looks like yo' done op'rated on him with a axe!" put in Bassett.

Whitey told how he and Pedro had come together in the little cave, and how the man, not recognizing him, had unloosed the thongs that held his hands. And how, with the rock that he had sat on painfully, he had bowled the Indian over the cliff.

"Here's th' Piute now," said Crowley, dragging the sore-headed Crow into the circle about Whitey.

"That's the one!" said Whitey, identifying him. "And while I'm glad I didn't kill him, yet he had something coming to him on account of the jabs he gave me in the ribs with his rifle. I can feel 'em now! He had his head turned, listening to the firing, and he just started to look around when I stepped out of the hole and let him have it. I was so excited over getting him that I forgot all about Pedro for a second; and

when I turned around, Pedro was just coming out of the cave himself. 'Good shot!' he said. He didn't recognize me, as I had my back turned. But the next minute he knew who I was, and he started for me." Whitey paused, and the men waited for him to go on, but the boy evidently didn't intend to give any very lengthy description of the fight.

Bassett was particularly impatient. "Go on, kid!" he said. "Tell us about it!"

"Well," said Whitey, modestly, "I guess he didn't know a great deal about boxing, for he rushed at me, wide-open, with his eyes shut, and telling me what he was going to do to me, but I stood him off with some straight left jabs. After a minute he saw that he couldn't get me that way, and he began to crowd me; and so I talked to him to get him mad so that he would keep up his rushing. Once I fooled him and got him to look behind him; and when he did, I knocked him down; but he was pretty tough, and I didn't get a chance to finish him. But when he got up he was mussed up pretty badly and his face was a sight!"

"You *said* it!" agreed Bassett. "He looked like he come through a harvestin' machine!"

"You saw him, then?" asked Whitey, interestedly. "Is he dead? I took one look over the edge of the cliff and he didn't look as though he would amount to much afterward, but I didn't stop to make sure."

"He ain't never goin' t' bother nobuddy," said Bill, with finality. "Not in this world, he ain't! He's consider'ble dead! In fac', he's one o' th' deadest men thet ever lived! An' yo' are deservin' of a medal fer killin' him."

"I *didn't* kill him!" protested Whitey. "He killed himself!"

"Shore!" put in Bassett. "He run up ag'in a better man 'n him!"

"He ran up against *nothing* — that's what killed him!" said Whitey. "Whenever he rushed at me he shut his eyes; and when he made his last rush I was near the edge of the cliff, and I simply side-stepped and he went over the edge because he couldn't stop himself! *I* didn't knock him over!"

"Oh, no!" laughed Walker. "You didn't hav'

nuthin' t' do with it! Nuthin' a-tall. I s'pose yo' oughta stud thar an' kep' him from goin' over! 'F yo' didn't kill him, the' ain't nobuddy did! They can't take thet notch off'n yo'r gun, kid! Yo' git credit fer it, an' nobuddy else!"

"I don't like to think that I killed a man," began Whitey. "I —"

"Who said anythin' 'bout killin' a man?" asked Jordan. "He wa'n't no man! He wa'n't no human! He hed bin cheatin' th' rope sence he war two year old! He war under sentence o' death, anyhow, an' th' only decent thing I ever heard o' him doin' was committin' su'cide onto himself an' savin' th' caounty th' trouble an' expense. He war already dead 'cordin' t' law, when yo' met up with 'im." This logic, from a man like Jordan, served to make Whitey more comfortable. "Th' only thing, I s'pose, is, we gotta go back thar an' bury 'im — which same I'm mighty glad t' do!" Jordan continued.

"*I* ain't!" said Walker. "Fur's I'm concerned, th' buzzards kin 'tend t' him. An' I wouldn't be s'prised 'f they let 'im alone — them birds bein' some cagey 'bout gittin' pizened!"

"Wal, I dunno," said Jordan; "I'd feel a heap safer 'bout him 'f I seen him buried 'bout fifty feet deep an' a coupla ton o' rock piled onto him; an' I'd like t' 'tend to it personal, so's I know it was did right!"

"On them grounds," said Walker, "I consents! Only I reck'n I'd sink 'im a good deal deeper 'n whut yo' said. An' I reck'n the' won't be no flowers!"

"Well, considering the character of the gentleman, I will be glad to furnish pick and shovel," said John Big Moose. "It is not fair to the buzzards to let him stay where he is!"

"Well, whut come off, then, Whitey?" asked Jordan. "Yo' ain't told whar yo' went an' whut yo' done while we was fine-combin' 'bout twenty square mile o' wilderness a-lookin' fer yo'."

"Well," said Whitey, "I didn't want to go back the way the two Indians brought me, for I could hear the firing, every now and then, and I didn't know how things were turning out. So I beat it around on the north side of the mountain, and came straight to the mine here. I knew that Mr. Big Moose was my friend, and I sneaked

into the tunnel — there was nobody about that I could see — and I suppose I went to sleep while I was watching. I hadn't been to sleep since day before yesterday, and I was dog-tired — Injun and I had been through quite a lot, in that time — and the next thing I knew I crawled out here and found you."

"Wal, I'm dog-gonned!" said Jordan, rising and stretching. "Th' nex' time I go out onto a rescuin' expedition fer yo' two kids, I hope somebuddy'll give me a good call-down 'fore I start, an' try t' beat some sense inta my head with a club! I might 'a' knowed how things'd be," he said to the other men, "an' should 'a' jes' set pat an' waited fer them two t' turn up. Them two don't need no rescuin' whutsumever, bein' entirely cap'ble o' rescuin' themselves!"

"'S long's yo're into th' rescuin' business," said Crowley, "mebbe I c'd use a little of it. Whut about rescuin' my mine from th' grasp o' this here seven foot o' eddicated Piute that has jumped it? Now 't I reconsider," said Crowley, hastily, as John Big Moose looked at him a little belligerently, "I withdraws th' word 'Piute,' but

I won't take back th' 'eddicated' ner th' 'seven-foot' part of it! An' when I says 'rescuin',' I don't mean by no vi'lence an' carnage — I mean, s'posin' Mr. Moose an' me spreads our cards onto th' table an' come to a show-down, peaceable?"

"I am willing to submit my title to the mine — or rather, the tribe's title, as I don't own the mine individually — to any fair-minded body of men for adjustment," said John. "And while I, personally, believe you gentlemen to be fair-minded, I am not willing to say, in advance, that I am going to abide by your decision and surrender the mine if you decide against me. I think Mr. Jordan here will admit that the Indian has not *always* been accorded justice at the hands of white men."

"Wal, what do y' know 'bout this here oratorical galoot!" whispered Bassett, gasping.

"Didn't I tell yo' thet th' perfess, here, hed 'em all tied to a post?" chuckled Walker.

"I'll say he's some gifted at shootin' off his mouth!" agreed Buck Higgins, as soon as he could get his breath after John's speech.

"Wal," said Jordan, slowly, in answer to John Big Moose, "I dunno's I c'n say thet th' Injuns got none th' *best* of it — not reg'lar, anyhow, they didn't. But mebbe, as Crowley says, it might be a good plan t' show both hands 'fore anybuddy reaches fer th' pot. How come yo' all t' git title to her, Mr. Moose? To a man up a tree it looks like yo' all done jumped her when Crowley was workin' her."

"No," said John. "Crowley was the one who started the shooting, not waiting to find out our errand, which was perfectly peaceable."

"Wal," said Crowley, in defense of his action, "'f a man who's workin' a gold-mine sees a passel o' Injuns sneakin' 'round through the trees, mebbe it's jest as well t' open up proceedin's t' onct. I admit thet mebbe I war some hasty, not bein' acquainted with th' perfesser here."

"Possibly, then," said John, "your admission acquits us of the charge of claim-jumping. Now, in regard to the title — some weeks ago a man by the name of Babcock staggered into our village, hopelessly ill of a fever. We took care of

him and nursed him; but despite all we could do — and it was a good deal — the man died. Before his death he called me in and gave me a detailed description of a mine — a gold-mine — that he had discovered and upon which he had done at least the amount of work that the law requires to establish a claim, although he had never filed one officially. There is no doubt about this being the mine. In return for our kindness, and knowing that he was about to die, he deeded the mine over to the tribe, and here is the writing that he gave," and John drew out a much crumpled paper, which, in a few words, and with a brief description of the property, conveyed the mine to the tribe. The paper was signed in a very shaky hand, "Luther Babcock."

Jordan did not look at the paper, but sat thinking very hard. Crowley, on the contrary, examined the paper carefully and scratched his head, but seemed to be at a loss to think of anything to say to offset the will.

"Looks like I'm mebbe euchred," he said, finally. "'Pears like th' perfesser holds th' right, left, an' joker!"

John Big Moose pursued his advantage: "While I don't say that all the laws relating to such matters — the laws regarding bequests by will, or the laws regarding the filing of notice of claim — have been strictly followed, yet I do say that this document gives us a better title than the one under which Mr. Crowley claims. What do you think about it, Mr. Jordan?"

All eyes were turned toward Bill, but he sat for a moment in silence.

"What did you say the man's name was?" he asked, at length, of John Big Moose.

"Luther Babcock," answered John, handing the paper to Bill.

"Was he a squat, oldish man," asked Jordan, "mebbe into th' sixties — 'thout no teeth t' speak of — 'cept a coupla snags, an' some gifted as regards profanity?"

"Yes," said John, smiling; "the description fits him exactly, especially the profanity part of it. I don't know that I ever heard any one that could 'cuss out' the fever the way he did. You seem to have known him."

"Yes," said Bill, "I knew him all right. Him

an' ol' man Granville, Whitey's uncle thet kicked off las' spring, was great chums. This here Babcock used t' come t' th' ranch 'bout once in so often, an' him an' th' ol' man'd set into a game o' pedro er seven-up till all hours. Thet's how I knowed 'bout Babcock's cussin' — ol' man Granville bein' consider'ble of a card-player. Babcock was to th' ranch jes' before he come into th' mount'ns this time."

Bill stopped, and John waited for him to continue. "Yes," he said, finally, "you undoubtedly know him, but what has that to do with his title?"

Bill did not speak immediately. At last he said, "Mr. Moose, yo' paid me th' compliments o' sayin' yo' regarded me es a fair-minded man. I am goin' to say th' same thing in regards t' you."

"Thank you," said John, gravely.

"An' yo' thinkin' me fair-minded, an' me thinkin' yo' th' same, an' this here bein' a *gold-mine* we're talkin' 'bout — not somethin' triflin', like four-bits-wo'th o' smokin'-t'bacco — I'd like t' hev yo' come over t' th' ranch an' look at

somethin' I c'n show yo'. I'll go 'long with yo' so 't yo' c'n be shore I ain't cookin' no frame-up onto yo'."

John smiled. "As far as that is concerned," said he, "I have no fears that you will 'frame me'; so if you will tell me what it is you want me to see, maybe that will make a trip to the ranch unnecessary. I suppose it is something relating to Babcock, and possibly affecting the title to the mine?"

"Both them suppositions is correct," said Bill: "an' while I'd a heap sight ruther yo'd go an' see thet it's all reg'lar — an' es far es thet goes y' c'n come any time an' verify whut I'm sayin' — yet 'f yo' want t' take my word, here she is: Ol' man Granville hed a way o' grub-stakin' a lot o' people. Seems like the' was a passel of 'em thet must 'a' lived off'n him by thet process of extractin' somethin' fer nuthin'. All any one o' them hombreys hed t 'do was t' come t' th' ranch an' smooth th' ol' man's fur th' right way — tell him whut a fine ranch he hed an' set into a game o' pedro er seven-up with 'im — an' th' ol' man'd loosen up an' stake 'em

t' most anythin' they asked fer — outfit 'em complete, like as not. Mebbe some of 'em was on th' level, but the' wa'n't a doubt 'n th' world thet most of 'em jes' went prospectin' down t' th' Junction — prospectin' t' see whut they c'd git fer th' outfit!

"But thet didn't make no difference t' th' ol' man — he went right along doin' it — cuss a little, mebbe, when he found out he'd bin trimmed, an' r'ar 'round fer a spell an' swear he'd never do it ag'in — an' when th' nex' one come 'long, dern 'f he wouldn't come acrost jes' th' same. He liked comp'ny so, 'specially anybuddy thet'd play seven-up, thet he'd lend 'em money t' play with ag'in' himself!

"But this here Babcock wa'n't thet kind. He war Scotch, er somethin', an' he'd ruther go out prospectin' whar he knew he couldn't find nuthin' than not go prospectin' a-tall! Prospectin' shore are a disease, an' ol' man Babcock hed a bad case of it. He come t' th' ranch las' spring, an' him an' ol' man Granville hed a extry long session o' seven-up, an' then ol' man Granville give him —"

"You mean, of course, that before leaving for these mountains, Babcock signed some paper giving Mr. Granville a share of whatever he found?" said John, a little wearily.

"The same!" said Bill. "Fifty-fifty — Babcock insisted on doin' it, 'count o' hevin' been grub-staked onct er twict before an' him not bein' a grafter. Ol' man Granville showed me th' writin', an' most laughed his head off 'bout it; allowin' as how he let Babcock draw it up jes' t' humor him. An' he outfitted th' ol' cuss some complete—was the' any o' Babcock's tools layin' 'round when he quit? Did yo' find 'em, Crowley, when yo' took possession?"

"Shore," said Crowley. "I done my work with 'em — leastways th' tools thet was here — I dunno nuthin' 'bout Babcock."

"They are probably here now," said John Big Moose. "Nothing has been carried away. Do you want to see them, Mr. Jordan?"

"Only fer this reason," said Bill. "'F this here mine was located an' worked by this pertic'ler Babcock on the grub-stake thet was giv' him by ol' man Granville, yo'll find th' pick

an' shovel an' sech is all marked with th' Bar O brand."

It required but a few moments for John Big Moose to have the tools brought, and there, plainly marked upon them all, was the brand of the Bar O!

"I'm not a lawyer," said John Big Moose, "but as the case stands, it would seem to me to make half the mine belong to the heirs of Mr. Granville and the other half to the tribe as heirs of Babcock."

"I don't see how it c'n be figgered no different," said Bill; "but them lawyers sometimes figgers out things pecul'er. Tho' I can't see thet the' no call t' let a lawyer git his hooks in onto it anyway, 'less'n Crowley here, who 'pears t' hev drawed a blank, wants t' go t' lawin'—which I take it he don't." And Bill turned to Crowley.

"No," said Crowley, grinning sheepishly; "I reck'n 'f law'll let me alone, I won't bother none with *it!*"

"Mebbe thet's a good way t' look at it," said Bill, smiling. "In thet case th' ain't nuthin' but the two heirs t' go in cahoots an' split." Bill

called to the two boys who were talking a little apart. "Wha' d' y' say, Whitey? I reck'n yo' an' Mr. John Big Moose'll haf' t' work th' mine as pardners, pervidin' them arrangements is agreeable t' yo'r pa."

Although Whitey had caught snatches of the talk, now and then, he had not, until that moment, realized that the Granville share of the property reverted to his father, and, in that way, indirectly to him. He was staggered by the thought, but quickly recovered, and without any hesitation said, "Where does Injun come in on that arrangement? If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't ever have heard of the mine, probably! He was the one that spotted the Crows, and it was he that suggested our following them. I guess he's entitled to as much as I am!"

Bill and John Big Moose and the ranchmen looked at the two boys and then at each other, and a smile of genuine approval broke over all their faces.

"Dog-gone 'f thet ain't pretty square!" said Walker. "I ain't saw many people handin' goldmines 'round thataway, not this season I ain't!"

"These here — now — Si'mese twins ain't got nuthin' on them two kids!" said Bassett, admiringly. "I reck'n they's got some sech idee 'bout bein' pals like them three Frenchmen hed into one o' whoozis's books — I wouldn't make no stab 't speakin' their names — 'all fer one, an' one fer all!' I seen 'em in a movin'-pitcher onct, an', b'leeve me, they was some gang!"

"I would like to say to you men," said John Big Moose, "that I have never seen or read anything more wonderfully loyal than the way this Indian boy stuck to his friend when things looked pretty bad for both of them. He had all the chance in the world to run away — get off with a whole skin! In fact, I advised him to do it — almost compelled him to do it — but he scorned the thought, and started back to what he must have believed to be almost certain death rather than desert his white friend! And I'm mighty glad to see it appreciated!"

"Good ol' Injun!" said Bill Jordan, putting his arm about the boy, affectionately. "It don't s'prise me none, though; an' I reck'n it don't s'prise none o' th' boys o' th' ranch!"

"You *said* it, Bill!" agreed Walker. "Us fellers seen th' pair of 'em perform before!"

"Wal," continued Bill, "I reck'n the' won't be no complaint on 'count o' Mr. Sherwood not doin' whut's square by Injun, him bein' some partial to th' kid hisself. So 'f things is satisfact'ry t' Mr. Moose, here, I dunno's the's anythin' more t' be did — leastways, not by us, though I s'pose him an' Mr. Sherwood 'll hev t' git t'gether an' hev things drawed legal, th' handlin' of a gold-mine bein' some different from sellin' a coupla steers."

"The more I think of it," said John Big Moose, "the better the arrangement appears, because the tribe would have not only the moral support of you white men, but undoubtedly Mr. Sherwood, when he is assured of the great value of the mine as I am, will advance the money to develop it properly."

"Seems to me we are forgetting one thing," said Whitey. "Where does Mr. Crowley come in on all this? Perhaps he hasn't got as good a claim as Mr. Moose and Injun and I, but I can't see him getting frozen out entirely! I should

think he'd fit in somewhere, for he has had a good deal to do with our outfit, in one way or another, and I guess it was a pretty good thing for me that he was at the Cross and Circle that time that Ross had me!"

Crowley lifted a protesting hand: "Kid," he said, "I reck'n ef th' account was balanced between yo' an' me, it wouldn't take one o' them expert account'nts t' find thet I owed yo' quite some, a'ready! I guess yo' consider'ble more 'n got even fer whut I done fer yo'—which wa'n't nuthin' t' speak about, anyhow. An' while I shore appreciates yo'r good intentions an' tenders yo' my thanks fer them same, I reck'n thet I ain't rightly in onto this here deal, me not havin' anteed. An' besides, I reck'n *yo'r pa is th' real owner* o' th' half thet don't b'long t' th' perfess and his friends, an' he *may* hev some idees 'bout disposin' o' chunks of it. I ain't doubtin' mebbe he'll consult yo' some as regards to it, but outside o' declarin' Injun in — which same does yo' credit — I reck'n I wouldn't do nuthin' more till yo' hear from him."

"Crowley," said Walker, "them is shore words

o' wisdom, but I want t' say thet ef it's some sight t' see somebuddy handin' out gold-mines it's sure some t' see guys refusin' 'em!"

"Wal," said Jordan, grinning, "ef this here mine turns out like th' perfesser seems t' think, I wouldn't be s'prised 'f the' was 'nuff to go 'round among th' boys so 't each one could git hisself a new Stetson, mebbe, an' a few bags o' smokin'!"

It was broad daylight by this time, and while, in the excitement of the foregoing hours, the men had forgotten to be hungry, now that things seemed to be pretty well adjusted, they suddenly remembered that they had such things as stomachs. When this matter had been attended to, Bill rose and took up a pick and a shovel.

"What's doin', Bill?" asked Bassett. "Yo' goin' out an' get yerself a gold-mine, too, this mo'nin'?"

"No," said Bill, "I wasn't aimin' t' do thet, but I reck'n Pedro hes done laid out thar in th' open pollutin' th' atmosphere 'bout long 'nuff. 'T ain't fair, as th' perfesser says, t' let th' buzzards run a chanct o' gittin' pizened."

"I'll go 'long with yo'," said Crowley, rising; "yo' may need a little help."

"'Tain't likely 't none of us guys is goin' t' set here an' let George do it — es th' feller says," put in Bassett; and so, the entire outfit of white men, accompanied by Injun, set out over the mountain to attend to the burial of Pedro.

They found the body where they had left it, and dragged it to one side where the soil seemed to offer a more yielding surface, and Crowley sent the pick into the ground with a powerful stroke. He had repeated this not more than three or four times, when Bill Jordan pushed him away and got down and examined the earth that had been turned up.

"Crowley," he said, calmly, looking up at the man, and holding a small portion of the earth in his hand, "I reck'n yo' don't need to be declared in on nuthin', 'cause yo' 've found a gold-mine fer *yerself!*"

As may well be imagined, this caused some excitement among those present. A close examination of the soil turned up by Crowley's pick revealed the fact that there were very

strong evidences that he had struck a surface vein. How much this would amount to remained to be seen. Under all the circumstances, it seemed best to Bill Jordan, and to the others when he proposed it, that some of the men should remain at the "gold-fields," as the men now called them, and that the rest should go back to the ranch where Mr. Sherwood might be, any day, and take his advice upon the proper course for them to pursue. The services of an expert mining engineer would settle the question as to how the mines should be worked, and whether they were of sufficient richness to warrant the erection of a big plant. It was, therefore, determined that Crowley, Bassett, and Buck Higgins should remain to stake out and protect the claim, with the assistance of the Dakotas that had come with John Big Moose. The latter, it was deemed necessary, should go to the ranch for a conference with Mr. Sherwood in regard to the claim that they owned jointly, and to make such arrangements for its development as the expert examination warranted.

By the time that Pedro had been buried away

from the vicinity of the vein found by Crowley — "The' ain't no cert'nty thet he wouldn't spile it" — and the other arrangements were completed, it was well on into the afternoon. But there was a ten- or twelve-mile journey back to the camp where Whitey and Injun had left their horses, and the little outfit, consisting of Whitey, Injun, Bill Jordan, John Big Moose, and Walker, set out, the two boys mounted on horses loaned them by the Dakotas, promising that they would be back within a week's time.

The trip back was uneventful, although Whitey prevailed upon Bill to go around on the westerly side of the mine to get the skins of the two bears that had fought it out before the rock with the boys as spectators. The bear that had treed them was there, all right, but a thorough search revealed the fact that the second bear had probably managed to crawl away, for he was nowhere to be found.

The fate of this contributor to the drama was left unsolved, for these two bears chased the Indian, nearly drowned Crowley, and caused the boys to dance like monkeys on a hot brick

perched high upon a rock. Which of the two bears played the more important rôle is left to the reader.

Whitey watched the process of skinning the bear with great interest. When it was completed, Bill said, winking at John Big Moose, "Now, Whitey, seein' 't we've got him skun, I s'pose yo' 'd jes' as leaf' carry th' skin back t' th' ranch?"

"Sure!" said Whitey, starting to pick it up. Right there Whitey got a surprise; a big bearskin, such as the one he took hold of, will weigh in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty pounds or more! And Whitey, at last, came to the conclusion, game as he was, that if the bearskin had to be carried back by him it could stay where it was. Jordan, however, managed to pack it onto one of the horses, Injun gladly agreeing to walk as the going was very rough.

They reached the little camp in the clump of woods at the base of the mountain along late in the afternoon, and camped there for the night. On the afternoon of the second day afterward, they rode into the ranch yard to find that Mr.

Sherwood had already arrived and was badly worried about them. Of course, it took some time to tell all of the story; but to come back from the East and find himself a part owner in a gold-mine was a novel experience, according to Mr. Sherwood. And then followed a series of conferences between Mr. Sherwood and John Big Moose and Bill Jordan; but before the week was out, everything seemed to be settled and the return expedition awaited only the arrival of the mining engineer before setting out. Then it was that a bombshell was thrown into the camp.

"Son," said Mr. Sherwood to Whitey, when the latter came to him one day with Injun in regard to certain preparations for the trip back to the mines, "do you know what month this is?"

"Sure!" said Whitey. "October."

"Right!" said his father. "And doesn't that mean anything to you? Do you consider that your education has been finished?"

"Do you mean to say that I've got to go back to school?" moaned Whitey in a most forlorn way. "Just when things are happening and

we've got a brand-new gold-mine to 'tend to — and everything like that!"

"I'm afraid I do mean just that," answered Mr. Sherwood.

"Why can't I wait and enter at Christmas — after the holidays? I'm already a month late, now. I can study out here. You ought to see the lot that Injun and I have been doing in that line. I've been teaching him, and he's learning fast. It would be easy for me to study at the same time that I'm teaching him."

"If it would be of any advantage — in case you decide to let Whitey stay —" said John Big Moose, "possibly I might be able to guide him in the branches that he wishes to take up. I have had some experience in that way before."

"It ain't none o' my affair, Boss," said Bill, "but 'f yo' look thet Whitey over careful, I think yo' 'll be 'bliged t' say thet this here little trip hes did him a power o' good. He's growed like a weed, an' he's stronger 'n a yearlin' bull. 'Co'se, I ain't sayin' thet he'd oughta stay, but—I'm jes' thinkin' thet he's doin' right well whar he's at."

THE END

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